LEBANON

COUNTRY READER
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Curtis F. Jones	1946-1947 1968-1971	Third Secretary – Economic Affairs, Beirut Political Officer, Beirut
William J. Crockett	1951-1952	Technical Cooperation Administration Officer (now USAID), Beirut
George M. Bennsky, Jr.	1952-1956	Treasury Representative, Beirut
Armin H. Meyer	1952-1955 1961-1965	Political Officer, Beirut Ambassador, Lebanon
Thomas C. Sorensen	1952-1956	Information Officer, USIS, Beirut
Lawrence J. Hall	1953-1955	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Beirut
Dwight Dickinson	1954-1956	Political Officer, Beirut
Claude G. Ross	1954	Political Officer, Beirut
Joan Seelye	1955-1956	Spouse of FSO in Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr.	1957-1958	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Holsey G. Handyside	1957-1959	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Robert L. Funseth	1957-1959	Political Officer, Beirut
Walter J. Silva	1957-1960	American's Citizens Affairs Officer, Beirut
Richard E. Undeland	1957	Junior Officer Trainee, Beirut

	1958	Public Affairs Assistant, Beirut
William D. Wolle	1957-1958	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Michael E. Sterner	1958-1960	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Robert Theodore Curran	1959-1961	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
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Eugene H. Bird	1961-1962	Lebanese University and Arabic Language Training, Beirut
George B. High	1961-1962	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
David A. Korn	1961-1963	Foreign Affairs Officer, Beirut
Richard B. Parker	1961-1964	Political Officer, Beirut
G. Norman Anderson	1962-1966	Arabic Language Training/Political Officer, Beirut
Walter M. McClelland	1962-1964	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Hume Horan	1963-1964	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Dayton S. Mak	1964-1969	Deputy Chief of Mission, Beirut
Chester H. Opal	1964-1966	Information Officer, Beirut
David Hamilton Shinn	1964-1966	Rotation Officer, Beirut
Kenton W. Keith	1965-1966	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
James A. Placke	1965-1966	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Elden B. Erickson	1965-1967	Economic Counselor, Beirut
Dwight J. Porter	1965-1970	Ambassador, Lebanon
James K. Bishop, Jr.	1966-1968	Commercial Officer, Beirut

John R. Countryman	1966-1968	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Norman L. Pratt	1967-1973	Economic Counselor, Beirut
David E. Zweifel	1967	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Arthur A. Houghton III	1968-1969	Arabic Language Study, American University of Beirut, Beirut
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Marjorie Ransom	1968-1969	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
William D. Morgan	1968-1973	Chief , Consular Section, Beirut
G. Clay Nettles	1970-1972	Economic Officer, Beirut
Charles O. Cecil	1971-1973	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Robert B. Oakley	1971-1974	Political Counselor, Beirut
C. William Kontos	1972-1974	Deputy Commissioner, United Nations Relief Works Administration, Beirut
David Winn	1973	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
Edmund James Hull	1974	Arabic Language Training, Beirut
George Lambrakis	1975-1976	Deputy Chief of Mission, Beirut
Edward G. Abington	1975-1977	Staff Aide to Assistant Secretary, NEA, Washington, DC
L. Dean Brown	1976	Special Envoy, Beirut
George M. Lane	1976-1978	Chargé d'Affaires, Beirut
Morris Draper	1976-1978	NEA, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Washington, DC
Richard B. Parker	1977-1978	Ambassador, Lebanon
Sally Grooms Cowal	1978-1982	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv, Israel

Peter M. Cody	1979-1980	Director, USAID, Beirut
Robert S. Dillon	1981-1983	Ambassador, Lebanon
John M. Reid	1981-1983	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Beirut
Diane Dillard	1982-1984	Chief, Consular Section, Beirut
David E. Long	1982-1984	Policy Planning Staff, Washington, DC
David M. Evans	1982-1986	Political Advisor to Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, London, England
Robert B. Petersen	1982-1986	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tel Aviv, Israel
Georgia A. Rogers	1982-1996	Deputy Director, Citizens Emergency Center, Washington, DC
Eric J. Boswell	1983	Temporary Duty, Beirut
Stephen Bosworth	1983-1984	Policy Planning Staff, Washington, DC
Walter B. Smith, II	1983-1985	National War College, Washington, DC
Douglas R. Keene	1983-1986	Deputy Principal Officer, Jerusalem
David Winn	1984-1985	Political Counselor, Beirut
Parker Borg	1984-1986	Office of Counter Terrorism, Washington, DC
Francis Terry McNamara	1985-1987	Deputy Chief of Mission, Beirut
William A. Pierce	1987-1989	NEA, Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Washington, DC
John T. McCarthy	1988-1989	Ambassador, Lebanon
G. Jonathan Greenwald	1991-1993	Office of the Special Representative for Counterterrorism, Washington, DC
Joseph G. Sullivan	1997-1998	Co-Chairman, Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group, Washington, DC

Walter B. Deering 1999-2000 Security Officer, Beirut

TALCOTT W. SEELYE
Childhood
Beirut (1922-1933)

Bureau of African Affairs
Washington, DC (1968-1972)

Ambassador
(1976)

Ambassador Talcott W. Seelye born in Lebanon to American parents on March 22, 1922 and lived there until the age of 11. He joined the U.S. Army during World War II. He received a bachelor's degree from Amherst College in 1947 and joined the Foreign Service in 1948. Ambassador Seelye's career included positions in Frankfurt, Germany; Amman, Jordan; Beirut, Lebanon; Kuwait, Kuwait; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and an ambassadorship to Tunisia. He was interviewed in 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q*: Do you have any recollections of the Middle East as a young lad?*

SEELYE: Sure I do. I left at the age of eleven and remember, of course, growing up in Beirut. One of the unfortunate aspects of my youth in Beirut was that I became 1000 percent American and resisted learning Arabic. We had an American community school where in those days Arabic was not taught. At home, we happened to have Armenian servants because there were so many Armenian orphans and refugees who fled Turkey after the massacres. My grandparents lived with us, above us, and they and we hired Armenian orphans as servants; so I did not have an opportunity to learn Arabic from the servants. The result was that my parents decided at one point, when I was nine or ten, to bring in an Arabic tutor to teach me and one of my sisters.

I apparently resisted that and the result was that when I left Beirut at the age of eleven, I am ashamed to say, I knew only a half a dozen Arabic expressions. This came home to roost at one point later on when I was in the U.S. Army. After basic training at Camp Walters, Texas, my record card popped up, "Oh, Seelye has spent 10 years in the Middle East." So they pulled me out and sent me to the intelligence training center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland where I was interviewed by an Arab-American to see how fluent my Arabic was. He noted that my Arabic was virtually non-existent.

Anyway, that was the beginning of my awareness that having lived that long in Beirut, people would assume that I knew Arabic. Later on in the Foreign Service, when I spent all the hours of drudgery and blood, sweat and tears learning Arabic and reaching a modest degree of efficiency, people would say, "Oh, yeah, Talcott knew Arabic as a boy." That used to bother me because this

did not take into account all the effort I had put into learning Arabic as an adult.

Q: *During this period, we are talking about 1968-72, was the PLO causing problems in Lebanon?*

SEELYE: Even before the PLO guerrillas got there, Palestinians caused problems. I remember there was a famous Cairo agreement signed in 1969 between the Lebanese and Palestinian organizations which, as I recall, allowed Palestinian guerrillas to function in Lebanon to a limited extent. So the Lebanese were already having problems with them. But when this whole big guerrilla force moved in from Jordan, that really compounded the problem.

Q: *Looking at Lebanese affairs, was there concern that the Maronites were having too much influence with our embassy? These were the social people of the area. They also have whatever the lobby is in the United States.*

SEELYE: Yes, the Maronites cultivated our embassy people. And I recall that our ambassador there once made a request for modest funds to help finance a Maronite publication. I recommended that we refuse this because I felt we would be drawn into taking sides in Lebanese politics if we did so. I remember he came back from Beirut, among other things, to plead the case. We had a meeting with Sisco and he made a case of how we should help these people; it was just a modest amount of money. Sisco turned to me and said, "Tal, I want you to give them the money." I went back and never did anything. Sisco never followed up on it. He was doing that in front of our ambassador. Sisco had confidence in me, and he supported my judgment. He just let the matter drop. And I let it drop. That is what the White House staff used to do, whenever Nixon gave ridiculous orders. Half the time they would ignore them. Our ambassador was a good man, but he was not an experienced Middle East hand.

Q*: Who was our ambassador?*

SEELYE: Dwight Porter. He had no background in the Middle East. I don't think he had sensitivity about the dangers of getting pulled into the Maronite orbit.

Q*: Were we able to get any feel in Lebanon at that time of what was going on in the Muslim community, which later became sort of the root cause...*

SEELYE: Well, the root cause was the Shiite Muslims. At that time I don't think we really had enough of a sense of the potential problems that could be generated from that community. We knew that most of the Shiites lived in the south and that the south was not as well off as the rest of Lebanon. Like any central government southern regions tend to be ignored. At that point there was no suggestion that the Shiites were a political problem. The Speaker of the House, according to the original covenant that set up Lebanon, was a Shiite. But in those days the Shiites were a small minority in the government. It has been the population explosion that has made them into the largest single group there.

... We had been going for about a week when one morning in Gabon (Libreville) I was awakened in my hotel room at 5:00 in the morning. I remember the sun was just coming up, when there was a knock on the door. It was the duty officer from the American embassy in Libreville. He said, "We

have a NIACT from the Department." It was slugged "from Eagleburger for Seelye." Just the day before we had heard about the assassination of our Ambassador, Frank Meloy, in Beirut. The cable said, "You probably have heard that Frank Meloy has been assassinated in Beirut and the Secretary has decided that you shall undertake a mission to Beirut and take his place on a temporary basis. We have reserved a seat on a flight leaving Libreville tonight to return to Washington via Paris. You are to take that flight." So all I could say was "Jesus Christ."

I waited two or three hours and then went up to the residence where Scranton was having breakfast with Andy Steigman, our ambassador. I handed him the cable and he said, "Sit down and have a cup of coffee." After Scranton read the cable he came over and puts his arm around my shoulder and didn't say anything.

The Scranton party took off in about two hours for their next stop, somewhere in Central Africa. But in the rush of affairs, I had forgotten to retrieve my passport which was being held by the Air Force escort officer. So the plane took off with my diplomatic passport. But that was no problem since the embassy fixed me up with a regular passport, and back to the U.S. I went.

I arrived back in Washington, got home, dumped my bags and went down to the Department. It was about 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening. There was a duty officer in AF who had obviously been given a cover story because he didn't know why I was back. To my question about the whereabouts of the Secretary, he said, "Well, he is out at Andrews Air Force Base to meet the body of Ambassador Meloy." So I sent word up to his staff that I was in AF and that when the Secretary returned I was ready to see him. He got back in about an hour and I went up to meet with him. I made two points to him but can't remember what one of them was. The most important point was that my understanding was that the PLO was the force providing security in West Beirut since the Lebanese military had fallen apart and their security forces were nonexistent. West Beirut east of the green line is where all the embassies were located, as well as all government ministries except for the Presidency. And, of course, Meloy was killed while about to cross that green line. So I said that I felt in order to perform my duties, which was to re-establish contact with the Lebanese government, I needed to have effective security. This could only be provided by the PLO and therefore I asked for authority to deal with the PLO.

The Secretary hesitated and hesitated and said, "Well, I will tell you what we will do. I will authorize your security officer to deal with his counterpart in the PLO with regard to your security. But there will be no political discussions, nothing at your level." I said, "Okay."

I came in the next day and started reading cables. In reading the cables I saw a cable which had been sent out to Frank Meloy a few days before his assassination. Apparently at that point 30 days had elapsed since Frank Meloy had arrived and normally diplomatic protocol forbids you to deal with any government officials until you have presented your credentials to the chief of state. Meloy was waiting for an opportunity to do just that, but in order to do that he had to cross the green line to present his credentials to the President. He was waiting for the crossing to be safe. The crossing was risky, fighting was going on on the west side and also along the border line. The cable from the Department that went out said in effect, "We appreciate the fact that you have to be very careful about your security, but we hope that as soon as possible you will cross over and present your credentials because the fact that you do not have relations with key government

officials is inhibiting things and making it difficult for us to have a relationship." That was the essence of the cable. To me that was the cable that triggered the death of Frank Meloy.

Q*: I have heard stories that Larry Eagleburger was behind that. I don't know.*

SEELYE: So, Meloy, as we know, took with him the economic officer, Waring.

That Sunday morning after I read the cables I was up in Larry Eagleburger's office and they were trying to decide who they would send with me. The embassy was in kind of bad straits in terms of morale. It didn't have strong leadership apparently. There was no very senior officer there. They felt the need to jack it up as well as to undertake this political mission. Larry Eagleburger had with him the head of security whom I had known and who said, "Well, what about Ray Hunt?" I said, "That's a great idea." I knew him slightly and thought very highly of him. So they called in Ray Hunt -- poor Ray Hunt -- and said, "Ray, how about going along with Seelye to Beirut?" Ray looked shocked. He said, "Well, let me think about it." He already had a mission doing something, going on a Presidential trip or something. He said, "Well, I will have to cancel all this." "Never mind, this is more important," said Eagleburger.

That is how it was that Ray came along. We didn't really have much choice. Although some people said later on that we could have had a choice, but I never thought I had a choice.

Then, another person was brought in. My security officer from Tunisia, Robbie Robinson just happened to have come back by ship. They said, "We have to send two security officers, how about sending him along." I said, "Fine." So Robinson also came along. They also added as the second security officer to accompany me, McCarthy, who was then with Nancy Kissinger.

So we were planning the trip. The next question was how to get me into Beirut because the airport had been closed for five or six months. I heard from the grapevine that CIA was being consulted on ways to get me in surreptitiously. All kinds of hair-raising ideas were being offered. Then Henry Kissinger said, "Well, I am meeting with my chiefs of mission in Paris on Wednesday. You come to Paris, I want you to be there. Then position yourself in Paris until we can get you into Beirut.

So, everything was done in a hurry. I think it was Monday that we took off, I can't remember, the two security officers and I and Ray Hunt. In the rush of affairs we arrived at Dulles airport and I had left my air tickets on my bureau in my bedroom. Well, that didn't cause me any problems as we were flying TWA and the security people said they would take care of it. We arrived in Paris and the funny thing was that Kissinger was so security conscious, as he still is, that every chief of mission from the Arab world assigned to that Paris meeting was assigned a security car with a French policeman while in Paris. This meant me too. It was ridiculous. Here I was with these two security officers plus one or two French cars.

We met with Kissinger in the secure "tank" in the embassy. I will never forget that meeting because attending were Hermann Eilts from Egypt, Bill Porter from Saudi Arabia, Pickering from Jordan, and Murphy from Syria, etc. The meeting had hardly started when Hermann Eilts, of all people, said to the Secretary, "When are we going to recognize the PLO?" Well, that stunned me because Hermann, who is a brilliant Foreign Service officer, outstanding, is also cautious and

careful. He was the last person I would have thought at a meeting like this would have said that. Well, that provided the opening. I jumped in and said, "Now that is a good point. I am going to Beirut and the PLO is operating there." So the whole meeting started off on the PLO and the Secretary was kind of put off by this offensive. He made some comment, "Never have I been pressed so much on the PLO in my life."

Of course, the Secretary had made a commitment to the Israelis during the disengagement talks of 1973 and 1974, that the U.S. would neither recognize nor negotiate with the PLO. But he always claimed that he had not precluded a dialogue -- that the intention of that undertaking was to leave a loophole for dialogue. This loophole, however, was closed by successive administrations either inadvertently or advertently...Carter and Reagan.

We had that meeting with our Middle East ambassadors. Before I left Washington I had said that while in Beirut it would be useful to have somebody over on the East side representing me since obviously it would be inadvisable for me to try to cross the green line in view of what happened to my predecessor. The President was located in East Beirut, where things were safe, and also located there were Maronite leaders and leaders of parties I ought to be in touch with. So somebody said, "What about Ed Djerejian?" who at that point was consul somewhere in southern France. So Ed came up to Paris and we talked together. I said to Kissinger in the "tank," "I have a proposal that Ed be located over there and that we have a walkie-talkie scrambler so I can talk to him without being overheard." Kissinger thought it was a great idea. However, Djerejian never came because at the last minute his wife, with whom he had been married for only a short time, threw a fit and said that she wouldn't let him go, it was too dangerous -- although East Beirut was a lot safer than West Beirut. So that never worked out.

We had been in Paris for two or three days when suddenly word came that the airport in Beirut had miraculously opened up after five or six months of being shut tight. I was told to fly immediately to Athens and get ready to fly to Beirut, which I did. But the news came in about 11:00 at night and the security officer in Paris said they had to give me a pseudonym. He proposed Cohen, or something like that. I said, "I don't think that would be an appropriate pseudonym in that part of the world. Let's think of another one." So he thought of another one. I was also given a flak jacket with bullet proof vest and a London Fog bullet proof raincoat. Of course it never rains in Beirut in June. I tried on the flak jacket in my Paris hotel room and found that there was only one suit jacket I could put over it without looking too bulky.

So there were four flak jackets given to us and the party turned out to be, me, Ray Hunt, the two security officers and some young communications guy. There were five of us but only four flak jackets and one London Fog raincoat. The raincoat was given to the communications guy who was about 5'2" talk so it came down to his ankles. We got to Athens and shortly thereafter the first plane left Beirut airport and arrived in Athens. So we were at the airport to take it back to Beirut. Nat Howell came off and some others, breathing heavy sighs of relief. We, somewhat apprehensively got on the plane with our pseudonyms. We were in first class. The flight attendants were all smiles. They wanted to know our names and I gave them my pseudonym. They smiled in a way leading me to believe they knew exactly who we were and that we weren't fooling anybody. There were very few passengers on the plane, needless to say.

We flew in over Beirut very low and landed at the airport. My security people, who were overly security conscientious, told me to be the last one off. Then they gave me the signal and as I emerged from the door of the plane, there at the top of the steps was a nattily dressed military type who turned out to be a PLO major who greeted me and escorted me to my car. It was the ambassador's armored car. The ambassador's chauffeur was also killed in that crossing and I will mention more about that later. His successor was sitting on the seat like this, crouched way down with just his head showing above the window.

Oh, one thing I might mention. Before I left Washington I was invited to President Ford's office because I was supposed to be a Presidential emissary for some reason or other. We were talking about my mission and he said, "Is there anything that we can do for you?" And I said, "Yes, I understand that the morale at the embassy is understandably low and it would be nice if we had some new Hollywood films." So he turned to Brent Scowcroft and said, "Let's do that." So a footlocker of films had been produced and were on the plane with us. But it took longer to get that footlocker off. So I was sitting in that car waiting for that footlocker of films to be off loaded and we could hear shells in the distance and shooting not too far away. The driver was slumped down in his seat with a PLO major sitting to his right and my security officers were sitting with me and Ray Hunt was in the car behind me. I began to wonder if it was worth waiting for those films. Finally they managed to extricate the footlocker and off we went.

In front of us was a pickup truck full of PLO soldiers and another PLO pickup truck in back of our little convoy as we started out to the embassy. We took a bypass around Beirut. Once we went by artillery pieces firing away at some target. Anyway, we got to the embassy safely. The next morning Ray Hunt immediately began to focus in on management and administrative problems and rearranged offices so that my office was not so high up and vulnerable but lower down in the building.

The next day the PLO set up mortars right next to the embassy. Now from the embassy we could see Junieh across the Bay of Beirut. Junieh was the headquarters of the Lebanese Forces, the Maronite militia. The fighting going on was pretty much between them and militia elements on the West side composed of PLO, leftist Muslim groups, etc. This was the nature of the confrontation at that point. The PLO started firing mortar rounds toward Junieh. We could see the smoke where the rounds dropped. And then Junieh started firing back. Fortunately the returned shells didn't hit the embassy but several landed on the AUB campus, fortunately with limited damage. To this day I don't know if they purposefully avoided the embassy or if they just didn't target very well, but we were spared. Clearly the PLO did that as a kind of provocation.

The afternoon of the next day we heard that the next MEA plane that came in had been hit by a shell from Junieh and the co-pilot had been killed and the plane damaged. The airport was shut again for another four or five months. So I had gotten in in a two-day opening. I have no idea why that window of two days developed, whether it was to let me in.

I obviously was not going to be bound by any protocol regarding presenting credentials and started my round of calls on Lebanese officials. Every time I was about to make a call my security people would go out and with the PLO plot the route of my approach and reconnoiter. And so that was what we did. I did this for a couple of weeks and began to think this was kind of senseless. Fighting

was going on and you could tell when you left the embassy when it was dangerous and when it wasn't. There was kind of an innate sense that people had if there was danger or not. Sometimes you would leave the embassy and along the Corniche you would see peddlers moving around. Other times there would be nobody on the streets, just totally empty and you knew that there was a rumor that fighting was about to erupt in that area.

But we went out anyway. One time we were calling on Kemal Jumblatt, who was a leading figure in the Socialist Party, head of the Druze, I could hear shells coming closer as we came out. Our security people said, "Come on let's get into the car and get the hell out of here." So we did and on the way one of our cars stalled, not my car, and we all stopped. Somebody appeared from nowhere, he used to work for the embassy, and said he would get a battery. So we left that car and went on. I said to the security people, "If it was getting dangerous, why didn't you come in and interrupt my meeting?" They had also said they had seen cars from one of the Palestinian radical groups circling the building I was in. They said they thought the meeting was important. I said, "No meeting is that important if you have threats from these groups."

Well, those were the kinds of conditions we were operating in. I realized that was no way to conduct diplomacy and it really wasn't very feasible to continue on in that fashion for very long.

Meanwhile we looked into what had happened to Meloy. Several things were quite significant in my mind. One was that the arrangement for the meeting with the President, let's say for 10:00 in the morning, had been made over the telephone, so it was known to those who were listening to our phones. Secondly, the embassy took a long time, longer than it should have, in checking back to see if the Ambassador had arrived at his destination. Let's say he was due to arrive at 10:00, it wasn't until maybe 11:00 or later that the embassy called, or maybe the Palace called asking where the Ambassador was. So crucial time passed which could have been utilized to save his life.

Then, after the party left the embassy, maybe an hour later, but after obviously the Ambassador had been taken, a call was received by the wife of the chauffeur. The chauffeur had been a terrific chauffeur, he had risked his life on many occasions during the civil war and had been very loyal to the American embassy. A call had been received by his wife saying, "We have so-and-so, but don't worry, he will be all right."

Thirdly, the Ambassadors' cars in those days were rigged with a concealed microphone in the ceiling. You had a button to the right of your seat that you could press if you were in a dangerous situation. That would trigger the microphone and then the microphone would play back to the Marine Guard office. So the embassy could hear what was going on and take steps accordingly. That button had never been pressed in the case of Meloy. Nothing was heard at the Marine headquarters. Either it hadn't worked or it hadn't been pressed. My guess is that it had not been pressed, because my reading is that probably what happened was that the chauffeur had been blackmailed into agreeing to a friendly kidnaping. [This is just my view.] That is, the car would be stopped and the party would be kidnapped for political purposes, with no intention of killing them. They would be held and then all released. The kidnappers wanted to make a political point. Presumably the chauffeur had been put under such terrible pressure, maybe with threats to the life of his wife and family, that he figured that since no one was going to get killed he would go along with it. Further substantiation of this is the fact that as the party was approaching the green line, the

chauffeur, on his radio mike, told the backup car to turn around and go back because he said it wasn't needed anymore. The Ambassador obviously had not known about this exchange because it was in Arabic. Frank didn't speak Arabic, didn't know what the chauffeur was saying and probably didn't notice that the backup car had turned around. This substantiates my thesis.

Evidently the party arrived at a prearranged area where guys with guns stopped the car. The driver presumably says, " Ambassador don't worry about this, these are friendly parties," and opens up the window and the guns were poked in. And the group is taken. The driver probably told the Ambassador that this was a friendly group, so he did not press the button.

We learned later that the group that had taken the Ambassador, Waring and the chauffeur somehow turned them over or they were grabbed by a communist group, another group. Circumstances are unclear regarding the transfer. But they were evidently moved and killed immediately and put into body bags and within a matter of a couple of hours after the scheduled meeting their bodies were found on the Corniche.

The PLO was informed of the action because it was in charge of security. But it was quite upset because of tardiness in informing the PLO. They said, "Look, if you had notified us sooner we probably could have tracked down the kidnappers right away and saved the lives of the party." Which very likely could have been the case. That to me is the only explanation of how this could have happened.

Later on we found the Ambassador's vehicle in an abandoned garage intact. I had the unpleasant task of presenting a plaque to the driver's widow and two sons on the occasion of his death.

Q: *Just to give a little feel, what was this all about? Why was one group trying to kill the Ambassador?*

SEELYE: Well, you start out with the stigma attached to the close U.S.-Israeli relationship. That is the underlying consideration. Radical groups equate the U.S. with Israel, which had been beating up Palestinians and taken Palestinian land, etc. More than that, with regard to the Lebanese political dynamics, Muslim radicals alleged U.S. support for the Christian Maronite faction. Officially the U.S. did not support the Maronite faction. We were neutral. In fact, while I was in Beirut I frequently made public statements and interviews saying that we were neutral, wanted a reunited Lebanon and believed in preserving Lebanon's territorial integrity. And, in fact, we were very skeptical of the Maronites because they were causing a lot of problems. They helped stimulate the start of the civil war. So there was no truth in fact for their belief that we supported them on the political level. On the other hand, I have learned since then that the CIA was probably feeding them some stuff. Certainly they were later, whether they were at that time I don't know. I should have known if they were at that time. Be that as it may, the radical faction no doubt assumed that this was what we were doing, that we were helping the Maronites with equipment and money because they were well-heeled.

Those were two basic reasons. A third, of course, was that the communists obviously got Soviet money and the Soviets were anti-American, so they shared the anti-American orientation of the Soviets. They were the ones who killed Meloy. Those who had kidnapped Meloy had not intended

to kill. That is my theory...they just wanted to make a political point. So the killers were those with a Soviet connection. So this is a third element.

Q*: Well, now, you arrived in Beirut. Obviously it is dangerous, there is a war going on and our embassy is in the line of fire. Something that I have wondered about for a long time, what were we doing there? Common sense would say, "Okay, let's get out of here and go to Cyprus. If you want to talk to us you can come to Cyprus," or something of that nature.*

SEELYE: Well, eventually, I felt very much that way and cut the embassy down to a hard core. But the reason we kept even the hard core, in my view, was because it would have been terribly demoralizing to our friends in Lebanon had we pulled out entirely. Keep in mind the Lebanese had attached tremendous importance to U.S. relations. In fact, greater importance than they probably should have. I don't know if you have served in Lebanon, but whenever there were elections there, each party would go to the American embassy to get support because they assumed that we could wave a wand and get anybody elected. This was, of course, not true, but they just assumed the United States was there to help them. If we had pulled out it would have been extraordinarily demoralizing to them. And it would have led to other friendly Western embassies pulling out. It would have led to a chain reaction and psychologically I think we felt it would have been disastrous. So that is the reason I think we stayed on.

Q: *You said chain reaction, what would the end result of the chain reaction be and why would it be a problem?*

SEELYE: Well, I think people would have felt that they had been abandoned by the West and lost hope. It might have caused who knows what kind of reaction. In any case, we could afford to have a small attachment there. In addition to overall PLO security, remnants of one of the Lebanese military factions guarded the embassy. Also the AUB was still there. Here was the American University of Beirut next door to us. The AUB faculty was still there. They would have been very distraught had the United States pulled out its embassy. In fact, an amusing thing happened while I was there. We ran low on mazut, which was the term for kerosene, and all our heating ran on mazut. The PLO had control of the resources. The AUB hospital told the PLO at one point that it was running out of Mazut and therefore couldn't treat PLO fighters any more. So the PLO said, "Don't worry we will give you mazut for the hospital and the AUB campus will function." So we connected our lines up with the AUB lines and in effect the PLO was providing us with mazut.

Q*: Well, it just seems that we found ourselves hostage to forces even, you might say, the friendly ones. It was a Middle East squabble that within the context of American interests it seems we could pull out and say, "Look, you people settle your own problems, we are not going to put our own people in danger."*

SEELYE: I would have agreed if it hadn't been a country with such a close relationship with the U.S., including the presence of the American University of Beirut.

Q*: How did you conduct your business?*

SEELYE: Well, the PLO would come by in their pickup trucks with armed PLO fighters to escort

me to calls on the foreign minister, or prime minister, or whomever. We would exchange views which I would report back to Washington. But I realized that this was not that important and really wasn't worth my risking my life and the life of my security people. As long as our people were hemmed up in the embassy, I felt that it wasn't quite so bad because I had never thought at that point that anybody was going to attack the embassy. Certainly the people in the East, the Maronites, weren't going to, and the PLO had a mandate to protect us and wouldn't attack us. So there wasn't any concern on my part that the embassy, itself, would be attacked. Although one day, I know after I left, I was told that a bullet had been found in the bed in which I had been sleeping. It had come in through a window and ricocheted or something. Maybe it was inadvisable to keep our people there, I don't know. At the time we thought it was advisable.

So, I traveled around and I slept in the embassy. Some of the embassy staff lived in houses outside.

Q*: You were sort of holed up in the embassy. This was before the time that a lot of hostages were being taken. How were we viewing at that time the outcome of the civil war? It sounds like nobody was going to get the upper hand and a lot of people were going to get killed.*

SEELYE: One thing I didn't mention was that there was a belief on the part of some Lebanese, and I don't mean to say Lebanese who were friendly to the United States, that our policy basically was to Balkanize Lebanon. There would be a Maronite area, a Shiite area, etc. I was constantly trying to refute this notion. Raymond Edde, a Maronite leader who had good relations with the Muslims, felt that way. He claimed that he had been told that by Kissinger. I denied it. Our official policy was to keep Lebanon intact. We were urging the parties to get together but we had no capability of getting them together. We would make public statements assuring everybody we believed in their getting together and wanting them to get together, but policy is limited by capability. There really wasn't anything specific we could do at that point beyond hoping that the war would begin to ease off. And, of course, none of us...that was 1976...thought it was going to last another 16 years.

Q*: I assume you had both military and CIA at your embassy. Were they giving you any prognosis?*

SEELYE: They were prisoners of their lousy reports. The trouble with DIA and CIA, particularly with CIA, is, as you know, they pay for their information. Therefore there tends to be an assumption that if you pay for information it is more accurate than information that isn't paid for.

Q*: Which is an horrendous leap of faith.*

SEELYE: Oh, terrible. Let me give you a specific example. At one point the station chief and the military attaché came to me and said, "We have to evacuate because the Maronite militia are about to launch an attack on West Beirut and we will be right in the line of fire." I said, "What makes you think that?" They said, "Look at all these reports." I said, "Well, you look at them. Read them again. What they say is that this is what the militia leaders say they are going to do, but that doesn't mean they are going to do it or be able to do it, because the Syrians are right on the outskirts of Beirut and they aren't going to allow these guys to do it. And they know the Syrians are there and therefore they aren't going to try it. They are just shooting off their mouths." So they pulled back and about ten years later I happened to bump into the CIA station chief and he said, "You were right." Well, I was right only because of common sense. They were believing their reports. So

there was no prognosis that the CIA or DIA could provide me that I didn't have a better feel for. But nobody could provide a prognosis as to when the civil war was going to end.

Q*: How did you and members of your embassy tend to look upon this whole thing in Lebanon? What were we doing; how did we hope it would work out; etc.?*

SEELYE: Unfortunately, I had a very weak political staff at that point. Nat Howell had left and there were a couple of young officers who were new and there wasn't much I could tap there. Ray Hunt was an administrative type so I was pretty much on my own. But I concluded and sent in a cable to this effect, that until the Arab-Israeli problem was solved, the Lebanese problem would continue to fester. You had all the Palestinians there and the Maronite and Palestinian confrontation which was very serious. The Maronites were so resentful of the large Palestinian element that Lebanon couldn't be put back together until we made progress on the Arab-Israeli problem. Well, I heard later that that caused a big rumpus back in Washington. The White House -- by that time at the NSC it was not Scowcroft but the Russian expert -- saw the cable and called Kissinger's attention to it. Kissinger was very upset for some reason or other that that kind of an analysis should be made, I am told by people back in NEA, and blew his stack that Seelye should be making that kind of analysis. Well, that is what we are paid to do, to make analyses like that. But that is not what Washington wanted to believe. They wanted to believe that somehow you could solve it without relevance to anything else.

But that certainly was my conclusion then, that it was going to rather along -- until we made progress on the Arab-Israeli problem.

Q*: How about the role of Syria?*

SEELYE: At that point the Syrians were very restrained. They were too restrained, in my view, because one of the worst massacres occurred while I was there, the massacre of Tall Za'tar. Tall Za'tar was the main refugee camp then that was a focal point for the Palestinian resistance movement. The Maronite militia decided to take it on. The Syrians, who came into Lebanon to prevent the Maronites from being eclipsed and defeated by their opponents -- Syria's objective was to maintain balance between the factions -- were at that point in league with the Maronite militia. They had for the moment abandoned their former friends, the communists, Muslim nationalists and socialists, in order to help the Maronites. And the Maronites knew that so they began to plaster Tall Za'tar with bombs and shells. On the radio I listened to these plaintive calls from Tall Za'tar, "Help us, help us, we are besieged and beleaguered." Finally, the Tall Za'tar leader said, "Okay, we give up," and the Palestinians walked out with white flags and were mowed down by the Maronites. Hundreds and hundreds were killed. And the Syrians, of course, had blood on their hands because they did not intervene. So at that point they were around Beirut but not in Beirut.

Q*: Did you have contact with them?*

SEELYE: None whatsoever. In fact, at one point, there was a suggestion that I meet with the famous Shiite leader who disappeared in Libya, Imam Sadr, who was a rising star among the Shiites. As you know, the Shiites were the depressed people of Lebanon. They were beginning to assert themselves. I heard at that point that Imam Sadr was very close to the Syrians, indeed even

perhaps a Syrian agent. I said, "No, I don't want to do that because it might look as if I am consorting with a Syrian agent." I think I made a mistake, I probably should have met him, but I didn't. At that point I was extremely sensitive about involving myself with a Syrian connection. But we didn't foresee the future Syrian involvement in Beirut.

Q*: What was it that caused the Syrians to be able to maintain a civil war for 16 years and to be so brutal?*

SEELYE: Well the Syrians didn't maintain it. They obviously facilitated it, but it was an indigenous war.

Q*: Well, what was it that kept on this very brutal fighting?*

SEELYE: Well, the Syrians didn't keep the fighting going.

Q*: Not the Syrians, the Lebanese.*

SEELYE: Well, I can't answer that question because I never would have thought that the civilized Lebanese could ever have lower themselves to such bestiality and brutalities as occurred. It is absolutely unbelievable and to me still inexplicable. It got so bad that Muslims would stop any car with Christians and shoot them and vice versa, right there on the spot. It was awful. It became absolutely terrible. And I cannot explain it. I can explain why Lebanon broke into a civil war, there are a lot of reasons for that. The fact that you had these feudal politicians who were running the show and the poor people in the south who had nothing. The big gap between rich and poor. The Palestinian incursion that threatened the dominating Maronites. All those things contributed to the starting of the civil war, but I cannot explain how it became so brutal. It was just beyond belief.

The Syrians believed in maintaining a balance of power in Lebanon that enabled them to dominate. They played factions off against the other, but that didn't mean they wanted the fighting to continue. It was much easier for them for the situation to be peaceful. So the Syrians did not want the civil war to continue. Also they didn't want any one faction to win.

Q*: At the time you were there, who was contributing...after all when you fire off mortars, mortars are expensive...where was the money coming from?*

SEELYE: Well, the PLO was getting most of its funding from Saudi Arabia.

Q*: And where were they getting their supplies?*

SEELYE: The Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc. The Saudis were providing a lot of money. The Kuwaitis to a certain extent. Also, the Palestinians working in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had two percent of their salaries deducted, which went to the PLO cause.

Q*: And where were the Maronites getting their equipment, etc.?*

SEELYE: Well, they were getting money from wealthy Lebanese who had fled to Europe and

probably from some French sources. They had a close relationship with France. Later on they were getting weapons from Israel. About the time I was there Israel apparently started providing American weapons.

Q*: What sort of things were you getting from the desk. You sent back cables saying that this was something that was going to be solved unless the Arab-Israeli situation was solved.*

SEELYE: I was talking every day with Maury Draper via radio telephone. I was sending cables back for general distribution, but talking every day with the desk. I was only there about five and a half weeks. I might say that before I left for Beirut, Kissinger said, "If you want to be ambassador, I will make you ambassador there." I said, "Well, let me go over there and take a look." And after two weeks there I decided I didn't want to be Ambassador to Lebanon so I sent a cable back saying, "Thanks very much, I don't want to be Ambassador to Lebanon." But that just showed you the power that Kissinger had. He could say that you could be ambassador if you wanted it.

Q*: You came back when?*

SEELYE: I went in in mid-June and must have come back in early August. I was there about six weeks. I said, "Look, we should cut down the embassy, I'll pull out, have no senior officer here, pull in our tentacles." There had been an evacuation before that, so we negotiated a second evacuation, offering it to non-embassy Americans in Beirut as well. At first we thought we would fly out if we could get the Christian militia to hold fire for a day. I called a contact on the Maronite side and said, "Could you check with all the militia and see if they wouldn't agree for half a day to lay off so that we could evacuate Americans?" After a day or so he called back and said, "I have assurances from all except one group that is on the hills above the airport. I can't get their assurances." So I told Washington that we couldn't evacuate by air and I would look into evacuating by land.

It was considered too dangerous to go on the main road to Damascus, but there was a circuitous route to the south. My intermediary with Arafat was the Egyptian Ambassador. So I asked him to contact Arafat and see if he could provide us with some security for a column to go south of Beirut and out. Word came back that we could do this. So we got all ready and notified Americans to be ready at various collection points. The night before, Arafat sent word that he couldn't guarantee security after all, it was too dangerous. I didn't know at that point if that was a political ploy by Arafat just to stick the knife in, or whether it was truly a security problem. Two years ago when I was in Tunis with a group I went to see him and asked him specifically that question, "When you backed off on your undertaking to escort our convoy, was that for political reasons or for security reasons?" He said, "Security reasons, we had information that made it difficult for us to assure that we could protect you."

I then notified Washington that we couldn't go out by land. Kissinger sent a rocket as was his custom saying in effect, "In that case, we are going to send in the Sixth Fleet and evacuate that way, to hell with the PLO. You just tell them that we are coming in with landing craft." I thought that we couldn't operate this way in this environment. Tell the PLO we are coming in? That is a threat and we need the PLO to help us to evacuate. We couldn't evacuate under dangerous conditions. So I deliberated and decided to do it my way, figuring I was risking something because

if it hadn't worked out my way I would have had to tell Kissinger that the PLO refused to help -- and he hadn't asked me to check with the PLO.

I said to the Egyptian Ambassador, "Look, we have to get out by sea. I wonder if you could get Arafat to agree to help us evacuate. He has been very helpful in providing my security. All we need to do is secure an evacuation point by the sea and just help us. Would he be kind enough to do that?" That was in late morning and I had several hours of apprehension waiting for the response. I thought, well, if word came back "no," what was I going to do? We wanted to get the people out, but we couldn't bring in the Sixth Fleet without PLO help. I would have had to go back and say, "No, the Sixth Fleet can't come in this way." Anyway, as it turned out the Egyptian Ambassador called back later in the afternoon and said, "Yes, the PLO will help." I didn't tell Washington how I handled it, I just told them to let me know what their timing was and we would be set.

So a couple of days later Washington notified us that landing craft were coming in, so we had people collected to evacuate. And to this day, Kissinger and others don't know -- I guess Maury Draper knows because I told him -- that we didn't do it the way Kissinger had asked us to do it, which was to just tell them they have to comply. So we evacuated, including myself. We took the landing craft and the security people were so security conscious that they forced me to go below. The craft took us to another ship which was like a mother ship that opened up and the landing craft just floated in. Then they sent helicopters and we flew to the aircraft carrier where we had lunch with the commanding officer. After lunch we were put into a little plane and catapulted off the deck, which is quite an experience because you are facing backward and a guy comes to you and says, "Attach your harness" and it is like, "boom" and suddenly there you are 300 feet away from the aircraft carrier. It is an incredible experience. We flew to Athens.

Meanwhile the Commander of the Sixth Fleet, Fred Turner, whom I had known when I was in Tunisia said, "Why don't you come with me, I will escort you back?" I said, "No, that takes too long, but thank you very much," and flew back directly.

Lebanese were not very happy at our pulling out. It was kind of demoralizing to have a second embassy evacuation although the embassy remained with a small staff.

Q*: When you got back to Washington, what was the feeling you got?*

SEELYE: When I got back to Washington I had, of course, to report to Kissinger. I got a feeling that people weren't overjoyed about developments. I got the feeling that Kissinger was mad at me, maybe because of that cable I had sent.

Oh, another thing I did. At one point I cabled asking permission to make a statement because there was a lot of misunderstanding about what our policy was at that point. The atmosphere was charged and I thought a statement made in a certain way would be helpful. Washington cabled back and authorized me to make it, but apparently it did so without checking with Kissinger. He had a passionate obsession of not allowing ambassadors to ever express themselves publicly, even in an official position. It was just his paranoia. I heard later that he thought I had done this on my own. So I had two strikes against me when I went back.

Finally after a couple of days after my return from Beirut Kissinger received me. Of course, he was all sweetness and light. He is the most duplicitous official that ever lived. He was probably damning me to others and to my face he kept saying what a great job I had done, etc. And then I went back to my AF duties.

I don't think it ever affected my relations with Kissinger because I saw him after that. I remember one time he called me at home when Bill Schaufele was away on a trip, Sunday morning about 8:00 and said, "Have you seen the latest cables from Angola [or something]?" I said, "Oh, Secretary, I am still at home." "Well, we have to get some responses out right away." Anyway I went down to the Department and brought people in and we drafted cables. I called him at home about 3:00 or 4:00 that afternoon to tell him we were all set. Then he began to reminisce, he said, "Well, I will get you out to the Middle East in another six months." So, I guess he got over these things. That was the end of my Lebanese connection.

RAYMOND A. HARE
Political Officer
Beirut (1932-1933)

Ambassador
Lebanon (1953-1954)

Ambassador Raymond A. Hare was born in Martinsburg, West Virginia on April 3, 1901. He received a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College in 1924. During his career, Ambassador Hare served as ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and the United Arab Republic, and as Minister Plenipotentiary to Yemen. In Washington, DC, he held the positions of Director General of the Foreign Service, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern South Asian Affairs, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Ambassador was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1987.

HARE: But, certainly the most important thing that happened to me in Paris is that there I met my wife. She was a student studying French. I proposed and she accepted. As I was shortly being transferred to Beirut, we decided to be married there. This turned out to be not so easy. My wife was a Roman Catholic. She knew that her Polish Catholic father would want her to be married in the Catholic church, which was fine with me. Lebanon was then under a French Mandate. So I went to the office of the French High Commissioner in Beirut to ask what the procedure was. He suggested that the U.S. Consul do it. I explained that he didn't have the power to do so. He then suggested I go to the Capuchin church (Catholic) in Bab Idriss and ask them. They were willing but said they'd have to get special dispensation from Rome, and that would take some time. I explained that my fiancee was already on the boat en route to Beirut and we couldn't wait that long. He suggested that I go see the Papal Nuncio to see what he must advise. I did so and got much the same answer. In desperation I said, "Well, I guess we'll just have to have the Protestant pastor do it." With that the Papal Nuncio said, "Wait a minute - wait a minute." He rang a bell and in came a monk with a long robe, sandals, and he said "Would you see if there isn't any authority that I could

have to marry this couple." After a long wait the monk returned waving a scroll and said "You can do it, Father, you can do it!" So we were married in the Capuchin Church in Bab Idriss. That is how we were married in Beirut, and we are still married happily after fifty years.

A word about Beirut in those days. It was by no means the sophisticated Mediterranean town that it became. There wasn't even a real hotel. One usually lived in a "pension," a sort of boarding house. Soon after I arrived the first hotel, the Saint Georges, opened - not the entire hotel, at first, just the bar overlooking the sea. My bride-to-be and I dropped into the bar to discuss plans for a modest reception. The barman overheard us, and suggested that we reserve his bar, since patrons were still rather sparse; in our youthful enthusiasm, we agreed and the reception somewhat unique in format seemed to go very well. Afterward, we went up to the mountains on our honeymoon at the Hotel Sursock, at Souk-al-Gharb and were escorted by the splendidly uniformed head kawas. He was in high spirits, thanks to alternating champagne and arak at the reception, and insisted in accompanying us to our bedroom and patting the bed for good measure! It was certainly an occasion to remember.

Life in Beirut in those days was simple. There were some aristocratic families, wealthy and cultured, who lived quite a separate life. They generally spoke French, traveled often to France and frequented several clubs which were quite exclusive. Most of these socialite families were Maronite Catholics or Greek Orthodox. There were also wealthy Muslim families who were very friendly. Lebanon was (and still is) a collection of religious and ethnic groups, each living its semi separate existence. While people had a certain feeling for Lebanon and being Lebanese, their first loyalty was their family, their native village and their religious group. If you ask a Lebanese "Who is that gentleman?" you will be told that he comes from a certain family, the location of his family village (generally in the mountains) his religious affiliation, i.e. Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Protestant, Shiite Muslim, Sunni Muslim, Druze, Armenian Catholic, etc. etc.

As a representative of the United States Government we were expected to pay calls on the heads of these groups. Outwardly all seemed to work well. Each group had its own charitable organization and took care of their own needy; it seemed to be a bucolic sort of world. There were little fissures to be sure, but if subjected to strain the entire nation could fall apart. Well, this has happened as we all know. Fragile Lebanon has fallen apart. It is a sad thing, and like Humpty Dumpty getting it put back together again won't be easy.

We hadn't been at Beirut very long before I learned that I was being groomed for the job of desk officer in the State Department for several countries, including Turkey, Lebanon and Iran. It wasn't long then that we were transferred from Beirut to Tehran.

... We left Jeddah and Saudi Arabia in 1953 for Beirut, where I was named Ambassador to Lebanon. As I mentioned earlier, I had served in Lebanon before. I described pretty fully the provincial nature of the city and its social and political structure. And I described my visits to the heads or the many and varied religious and political communities and alluded to the fissures which were evident even then in the social fabric of the country.

While Beirut and Lebanon had changed much, Beirut having become a much more sophisticated

city, little had changed in the social structure. As a newly arrived Ambassador I had to make the rounds on the myriad patriarchs and political leaders. While this might seem a boring, tedious tank, it was useful and a good thing as it showed them all that you respected them and their positions. One of the more interesting and amusing courtesy calls was the one my son and I paid on leaders of the Druze sect at its headquarters high up in the mountains. I recall that it was all very pleasant and picturesque. Afterward I learned that the Druze leaders were impressed by our visit and thought that the Americans must have something special in mind, not merely paying respects, since nobody had come up to see them for a long time.

Now a little about our program of aid for Lebanon. By the time I got there our aid program was well under way. Aid programs are a tricky thing. One tends to think that if one lends assistance to a person, group or country, that the aid would be appreciated. But one must remember that to the recipient, aid is considered as coming from an impersonal entity. The American government has lots of money and aid comes from someplace and that's about it. I found that the Lebanese were complaining that everything was not working. Why didn't the American do this? Why didn't the Americans do that? I decided that a change in our way of presenting our aid projects had to be made. From now on the question we had to ask the Lebanese was. "When are we going to stop it? When will we finish it up so that we can turn it over to you, the Lebanese? That is the purpose of our aid, that you can take it over yourselves." It was interesting to see what a change there was in the negotiating atmosphere after that.

HERBERT DANIEL BREWSTER
Vice Consul
Beirut (1946-1947)

Herbert Daniel Brewster was born in Greece in 1917 to American parents. He received a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University in 1939. His career included positions in Berlin, Paris, Rome, Athens, Beirut, Ankara, Istanbul, and Washington, DC. Mr. Brewster was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: *Then you were assigned to Beirut?*

BREWSTER: Beirut for a short while. That was just out of the blue; I stayed only a year. I went out in August of `46 on the ship known as the `Marine Carp.' It was one of those ships with twelve men in one cabin, twelve women in the other cabin. They were ships that were bringing American citizens back to the United States. Ten or eleven months there, and then despite the fact that people at the Embassy Athens when we went there for Easter 1947 said, "You'll never be assigned here while your parents are still alive, still working here; just forget it." We suddenly in June of `47 I got a cable URGENT. Brewster transferred to Athens arrive by September 1947.

Q: *Just a quick one here. Describe Beirut in 1946 and 1947.*

BREWSTER: It was their first independence. It was a beautiful city; Baalbek was a beautiful site

to visit. We traveled to Damascus a lot; saw Dean Hinton there, he was just a third secretary.

Q: *When the French left that area they had left without any hard feelings?*

BREWSTER: None. It was absolute peace and bliss. We just struck it right. Only two things on that side: Daisy Humphrey, a name some people will remember, was a sort of administrative assistant and she just ran the whole business; you went to Daisy for everything whether you were a first secretary or a clerk. The Ambassador, George Wadsworth, was a great Arabist but he believed in playing golf all day and then coming in and exuding Arabism from 8:00 to 11:00 at night and the secretaries, of course, were called in. But he was a gracious person; he was there for just a short time then Lowell Pinkerton came.

CURTIS F. JONES
Third Secretary – Economic Affairs
Beirut (1946-1947)

Political Officer
Beirut (1968-1971)

Curtis F. Jones was born in Bangor, Maine in 1921. He graduated from Bangor College in 1942 and then served in the Army for three years. In addition to Egypt, his overseas career has included towards the end of the war that he became interested in Foreign Affairs. He has also served in Lebanon, Ethiopia, Libya, Syria and Yemen. He was interviewed by Tomas F. Conlon on March 29, 1994.

JONES: In any event, after attending the Naval War College I was offered the choice between the Embassy at Beirut and Karachi, as political officer in either post. I had been a Middle East specialist and chose Beirut.

When I arrived in Beirut in June, 1968, all of a sudden it became the focus of the Arab-Israeli question, in the form of the Palestinians in the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. [Later on], in 1970, the PLO was expelled from Jordan. Lebanese politics became increasingly complicated in 1970 and 1971, when aircraft were hijacked in Jordan, and Syrian forces became involved in an abortive intervention in northern Jordan. Hafiz al-Asad refused to provide air cover and he [came to power in Syria] in 1971. He has been the president of Syria for the past 25 years.

Q: *When did the Lebanese Civil War get under way? Was it when you were there?*

JONES: The PLO had been driven out of Jordan, after having been driven out of the West Bank. The Syrians were not about to allow a rival force to establish itself in Syria. The same was true of the Egyptians. But Lebanon was already in the throes of so-called "confessional" strife between essentially the Maronites and the Muslims, with some Greek Orthodox support.

Q: *Wasn't there an agreement reached in 1943 or thereabouts concerning a division of power between the Christians and the Muslims [in Lebanon]?*

JONES: There were three factors at work. The first factor is that some Lebanese emigrate--but they are mostly Christians. Factor No. 2 was that the Lebanese Muslims--particularly the Shiite--had larger families because they were lower on the economic scale. Factor No. 3 was that Palestinian refugees went to Lebanon. Although very few Palestinians acquired Lebanese citizenship, they were there, they were armed, and they were a force to be reckoned with.

Q: *Then by the time you arrived in Lebanon [in 1968], the Muslims were far more numerous than the Christians, and the power sharing agreement of 1943 was no longer tenable.*

JONES: No. As a matter of fact, even at the time when the National Covenant was reached [in 1943], I suspect that in the Lebanon carved out of Syria by the French the Christian majority was a very small one--maybe 55% [Christian] and 45% [Muslim], at best. Over the years, counting in the Palestinians, who were a force, even though they couldn't vote, I suspect that the Christians or Maronites were outnumbered, 2 to 1. So the Embassy in Beirut became the major reporting post for the PLO problem during my tour there.

Q: *Was PLO headquarters in Lebanon?*

JONES: Yes, down in the refugee camps. There were a number of them. There were Sabra and Shatila in the [southern] outskirts of Beirut, and then there were bigger camps around Tyre and Sidon. I think that there were 12 or 13 [Palestinian] refugee camps in Lebanon. The total number of Palestinians in Lebanon was somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 people.

Q: *Was the internal situation in Lebanon calm enough so that you could move around the country?*

JONES: At first, it was. It wasn't until after I left Lebanon that the Civil War really flared up.

Q: *When did you leave Lebanon?*

JONES: In 1971. The Christians never believed that the Americans would fail to intervene to ensure their retention of power. In 1958 Camille Chamoun, then President of Lebanon, asked the U. S. to intervene in Lebanon. We were shocked by the collapse of the monarchy in Baghdad [Iraq] and also by the fact that some of the Lebanese notables had gone over to Damascus to pay homage to Nasser, to the UAR. So we felt that we had to do something about this. In one of our typically moronic actions we sent troops to Lebanon.

Q: *I understand that [our troops] were greeted at the beaches by kids selling Coca Cola and ice cream.*

JONES: Well, sure. Nobody shot at us. The troops just sat there for a while. Then there was a negotiated settlement, and President Chamoun was replaced by President Shehab, who was, in effect, the representative of the pro-Nasserist faction in Lebanon. Not pro-Nasserist to the extent

that they were willing to join the UAR, but certainly not pro-Maronite. So that our troops, as far as I could see, had no effect whatsoever on the outcome in Lebanon.

Q: *Of course, we didn't have any casualties, either. This happened in 1958, before your time in the Political Section in Lebanon. But it's interesting to explore the background of events a bit. It's curious to see that our involvement in Lebanon has run like a little red thread [in our Middle Eastern policy]--not always coherent, not always well planned, but it's there.*

JONES: Well, our Middle East policy has never been coherent or well planned, ever since we had one. In fact, before World War II, the U. K. and France "ran" the Middle East. Our concern was to establish contact with the oil sheikhdoms. We just wanted to make sure that we had access [to the oil]. We still compete with the British. We have recently been fighting like mad with them over supplying the Saudis with aircraft. We won the contract to supply them with jet fighters.

In any case, I had a very competent staff in the Political Section [in the Embassy in Beirut]: Ed Djerejian handled Lebanese internal politics and Tom McAndrew handled refugee affairs and the PLO--although I helped him out on this subject. I did reporting on the PLO also, just as a kind of a hobby in addition to general political work. Tuck Scully was the general factotum of the Political Section. Finally there was Joe Twinam. Joe was supposed to have gone to Baghdad, but after the [overthrow of the monarchy], we had no post in Baghdad. So Joe Twinam was supposed to report on Baghdad from Lebanon. In fact, he had no job. There really wasn't that much to report on.

Q: *Didn't we have a U. S. Interests Section in the Dutch Embassy in Baghdad?*

JONES: Yes, but we had no Americans assigned. As far as Joe Twinam was concerned, I received a letter from Dick Murphy, who was in charge of NEA Personnel. Murphy said that NEA wanted to transfer Joe Twinam to Jeddah [Saudi Arabia]. I took this letter to Ambassador Dwight Porter. He was and is a good officer and a fine gentleman, but he made a decision which I would not have made. He said, "We need Twinam in Lebanon." In fact, Twinam was not fully occupied, but Ambassador Porter instructed me to write back to Dick Murphy. He said, "Don't say anything to Twinam. Write Dick Murphy and tell him that we need to keep Twinam." So I wrote such a letter. We subsequently, as you can imagine, received a cable, transferring Twinam to Jeddah. [Laughter]. Twinam has never spoken very warmly to me since then.

Q: *It was all your fault.*

JONES: He probably found out what happened and thought that it was all my fault. Ambassador Porter was replaced by Ambassador Bill Buffum, who had been with USUN [the U. S. Mission to the UN in New York]. Then in 1971 I was transferred to INR as Director of the Office of Research and Analysis on the Middle East [RNA].

Q: *Did you know that your assignment to INR was coming up? Had you been consulted?*

JONES: No. I was recommended for INR by Dayton Mak, who had preceded me in Beirut as chief of the Political Section and subsequently was promoted to be DCM. When he left Beirut, Ambassador Porter brought Bob Houghton out from the Department to be DCM. Bob Houghton

had been the desk officer for Lebanon. So Bob Houghton benefited from the same treatment that I had, when I went from the Embassy in Damascus to be the desk officer for Lebanon.

Q: *This was kind of a pattern throughout your career. These assignments were made without reference to you.*

JONES: Yes.

Q: *This is the way it used to be. In many ways I always thought that it was a good system. Then, if you got an assignment that you didn't like, you could blame it on somebody other than yourself.*

JONES: Once in a while, as I say, they gave me a choice. They gave me a choice between Karachi and Beirut.

So Ambassador Bill Buffum arrived in Lebanon. Later he brought Bob Oakley out. Bob Oakley had been on his staff in USUN and came out as my replacement. I have followed Bob Oakley's career in Somalia with interest. So I went back to RNA. When we finish going over that period, that will conclude my reminiscences of my Foreign Service career. As I mentioned before, Dayton Mak had gone back to the Department as Director of RNA and subsequently retired [from that position]. He recommended me as his replacement. I got a cable suggesting that I accept this assignment to RNA. I was delighted because I always sought Washington assignments. I owned a piece of land outside of Washington, and my hobby was developing it.

I went back to RNA in mid 1971.

WILLIAM J. CROCKETT
Technical Cooperation Administration (now USAID)
Beirut (1951-1952)

William J. Crockett was born in Kansas on July 22, 1914. He received a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Nebraska in 1942. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942-1945. His career included positions in Beirut, Karachi, and Rome. Mr. Crockett was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1990.

CROKETT: I had a friend who worked in the State Department. He was responsible for recruitment for a new government program: the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), also known as the Point IV program. This was a new program initiated by the Truman administration. He told me that the Department didn't ask officially for military deferments or discharges. But he suggested that he would write a request for my release on State Department stationery to the General. Surprisingly enough, the General granted permission for me to be discharged from the Army to take a TCA job. So I was employed by TCA to be part of the first assistance program in Beirut, Lebanon. I didn't know that this would be my assignment when I first joined TCA; there were several options in the Middle East. They did it very well; they got the whole initial team together in Washington. It was headed by Hollis Peter who had been in the

Department at one time. We were given a month's orientation together in Washington and were given a little time to learn about our jobs. I was hired in October, 1950 and arrived in Beirut around Christmas time.

Q: *What attracted you to taking this major step?*

CROCKETT: I was enticed by the opportunity to be part of a program that had the potential of helping others in the world. Right after World War II, there was a perception that we should "save the world" and become involved in efforts to help others. I was very hopeful about what America could do to make a better world. So in 1950, I went off to Beirut.

Q: *What was your role in this new Lebanon TCA team?*

CROCKETT: I was the administrative guy. I was responsible for all administrative matters: recruitment, procurement, office space, automobiles, contracts, etc -- the typical activities that fall within the jurisdiction of a State Department administrative officer.

Q: *What was TCA trying to do in Lebanon?*

CROCKETT: :Lebanon in those days was a beautiful country, but backward. It contained a visible contrast between wealth and poverty, both extreme. The government was stable, divided between the Muslims and the Christians according to a well established formula for sharing of governmental functions. Our basic mission was primarily directed to the improvement of agricultural production and of rural living conditions. The rural population lived in dreadful circumstances; they still used wooden plows -- in many cases, you would see a donkey and a cow hooked together pulling a plow. They still used thrashing floors to thrash grain. You could see animals being herded over the thrashing floor with the grain being thrown into the air so that the wind blew the husks away. The living conditions were dire. They had a common water well which in most cases, upon testing, was filled with impure water as the result of drainage from the villagers' wastes. The villages had no toilet facilities so that they contaminated their own water supply. One of the first things we did was to build community toilets which we hoped people would use. We tried to get the villagers to let us brick up the walls so that the drainage would be eliminated or reduced. We experimented with new strains of grains and chickens. We brought in fertilizer to increase productivity. We attempted to improve irrigation with a plan to dam the Litani River to create a large irrigated area. That never got off the ground. All our efforts were directed to improving the villagers' living conditions. Our emphasis essentially was on rural development, although we also had a program in education curriculum improvement. We did very little in industry.

Q: *Did you have any difficulties in recruiting for the TCA mission?*

CROCKETT: No, we did not. As I said earlier, in those days, there was a feeling in the United States that we had a responsibility to help the world. So we had no problems getting people to join us. The technicians came primarily from universities. Most of the ones in Lebanon came from Iowa State. They were agricultural experts.

Q: *How did the Embassy receive this new breed of American representation, namely the TCA team?*

CROCKETT: Badly for the most part. We were never really accepted socially. We were never really formally recognized as being part of the Embassy, although even in those days, Washington wanted the Embassy to provide administrative support to our group. It was my job to try to work with the Embassy's administrative officer in getting the necessary services, like contracting, housing, local recruiting, etc. But we were viewed as an appendage of the Embassy. We were in a separate building far away from the Chancery. The TCA Director went occasionally to Embassy staff meetings, but even he was not very cordially received, although the Ambassador was much more cordial than either the Political or Economic Sections. They viewed us as interlopers and as additional burdens to their responsibilities for conducting diplomatic relations with Lebanon. An action program was beneath their status. I must say that I hated the Embassy.

The Embassy was relatively small, probably about forty people. The TCA mission grew to approximately 200 people. Such a large presence of course had an impact on the Embassy's personnel. We had to have housing and paid higher rents. We had household staffs whom we compensated better. We therefore raised the cost of living for the Embassy and ruined their little nest.

Q: *Did you ever receive the level of administrative support you expected from the Embassy?*

CROCKETT: We got help but it was not high quality because the attitude of the Embassy was to control and not to support. For example, we were going to import a herd of Holstein bulls to disperse throughout the country to improve the cattle stock. Holsteins were the cattle chosen by our technicians as the most appropriate for the job to be done. The Embassy's contract officer in the pursuit of his duties decided to seek bids and the Holstein was not the lowest bid. So he insisted that we get the cheapest bulls -- another breed entirely. The attitude was not one of supporting the program, but of controlling our activities to fit into the bureaucratic controls established by the Department. All of this reinforced my distaste for bureaucracy because we were governed by State's regulations which were too often mindlessly followed by its minions overseas.

It finally became so bad in the housing area -- we couldn't get the necessary housing for our people and we complained so bitterly -- that the Department allowed us to hire an enterprising young Lebanese to find and rent houses for the TCA members. He was given his instructions -- "We don't want to pay more than the going rates. We don't want to force rents up. We don't want to be laughed at by the natives as being those rich American suckers! So -- get us only good deals!". And he did. We got fine places at rock bottom prices. Everyone was amazed by his effectiveness. then one day another Lebanese came to my office with a complaint: "Your rental officer is taking big fees from the landlords for renting their houses to you Americans. He is cheating you! Oh, it is true that he is getting low rents from you, but he is making a fortune for himself!". I asked: "Why are you telling me all this? You don't even work for us!". He replied: "Because when you fire him, I want his job". So we looked into the charges and our man quite freely told us that he did get fees from the owners for renting their houses to us. He said: "So what? That is the way business is done here". We threw the "American book" at him. "Taking kickbacks is illegal!. We must fire you and you're lucky that we don't do more". He was confused, hurt and unhappy. "Fire me? Why? Haven't I done what you have told me to do? Haven't I gotten you fine housing at the lowest prices? Isn't

that what you wanted?". We agreed that it was. Then he continued: "Then why do you complain? I have done what you wanted and have used the ways business is traditionally conducted in this country. Why should you punish for following the practices of my country?". Why should we have indeed. Are we to always upset everything? Aren't there some customs we should leave well enough alone?

Q: *Did you eventually build up your own administrative staff?*

CROCKETT: A little bit, but not basically. Before I could do so I was co-opted by some State people who came from Washington to review the situation. They sold me on the State Department. We helped the Embassy to hire some people, who were on our payroll, but worked in the Embassy's administrative section on our programs. This turned out to be model for other Embassies which had to support Point IV missions and other similar government endeavors. It was generally concluded that this was the way to support new programs rather than create two parallel competing administrative sections. I spent a lot of time with the Embassy's administrative officer -- whose name was Ernie Betts -- to get the support our Point IV team needed. I worked with him; I socialized with him; I made available to him some of our resources that were not available to the Embassy. That embassy, even in those days, was a resource-poor organization, as embassies have always been. State Department was strapped financially. It did not then nor did it have during my period in it, have enough resources to adequately support those that were assigned to conduct diplomatic relations. Not enough cars, not enough staff. So in Beirut, we helped the Embassy with those resources and in other ways which then resulted in reciprocity with the Embassy providing assistance when it was necessary. We got much more done that way than in fighting with them.

Q: *How long were you in Beirut?*

CROCKETT: :Approximately for two years, from 1951 to 1953.

Q: *Besides reinforcing your antipathy to "bureaucracy", what other lessons did you learn in Beirut?*

CROCKETT: One was to listen more to the needs of the local people -- not be so sure of ourselves that we knew better than they when it came to their needs. I also learned that our norms and values might not be accepted by all and not to be so arbitrary in imposing them on others.

Q: *When you left in 1953, did you feel that Point IV was making any dent on the Lebanese rural areas?*

CROCKETT: Not very much. We attempted a number of excellent experiments, in such areas as poultry improvement, animal up-grading, agricultural productivity increases -- apples particularly -- but to get the Lebanese farmers to accept new approaches was very difficult. For example, the elders in some village that didn't want their wells encased because they were afraid it would spoil the taste of their water. People were change resistant. They liked their old customs and habits -- their old ways even when they were detrimental and harmful to them. Change was very hard. But then change is difficult everywhere!

Q: *Did you see any hope in the next generation?*

CROCKETT: We dealt primarily with the existing generation. In looking back on my Lebanese experience, I regret that we missed an opportunity to do something about the refugee camps. Many of the Palestinian refugees were encamped in the Beirut area and we did nothing to alleviate their miseries. We left of all of that to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It was a missed opportunity because those camps bred the "Arafats" of today.

GEORGE M. BENNSKY, JR.
Treasury Representative
Beirut (1952-1956)

George M. Bennsky, Jr. was born in North Carolina in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from George Washington University and a master's degree from the University of Michigan. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. In addition to serving in Beirut, Mr. Bennsky held positions in Madras and Lima. He was interviewed in 1993 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *Where did you go?*

BENNSKY: I went to Beirut. The office had moved from Cairo to Beirut after riots that had taken place in Cairo.

Q: *This was when they burned down the Shepherds Hotel and all that sort of stuff.*

BENNSKY: Yes. They moved the office to Beirut which was a great place in those days. I stayed out there four years.

Q: *Could you describe what the situation was like in Beirut in 1952-56 when you were there?*

BENNSKY: It was delightful. There were never any problems in Beirut. Everybody came through Beirut because it was such a nice place to come to. It had all kinds of amenities, nice hotels, restaurants. It was beautifully located. The Lebanese were the merchants and the financial center of the Middle East. You couldn't have been in Beirut at a better time then in the fifties. It was a delicately balanced country because it had more of a Muslim population than it had a Christian one. However, the Christians always had the Presidency while the Sunni Muslims always had the Prime Minister. They had learned to live together as a conglomeration of minorities. Within the Christian community you had Armenians, regular Catholics, Maronites, etc. You had different kinds of Muslims too, Sunnis and Shiites. You had Druze, who are throw backs to an earlier religion, and a powerful force in certain parts of the country. Unfortunately in the sixties too many Palestinians entered, after King Hussein threw them out of Jordan, and this upset the balance and ruined a great city.

ARMIN H. MEYER
Political Officer
Beirut (1952-1955)

Ambassador
Lebanon (1961-1965)

Ambassador Armin H. Meyer was born in Indiana on June 19, 1914. He received a master's degree from Capital University and a master's degree from Ohio State University. Ambassador Meyer held positions in Beirut, Baghdad, Kabul, and ambassadorships to Lebanon, Iran, and Japan. He was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1989.

Q: *And next I believe you were assigned to Beirut. Can you tell us a bit about that, how you happened to get assigned there and the situation in Beirut at the legation or embassy, whichever it was, the political situation?*

MEYER: My work until then had been with OWI and USIS in the dissemination of information. But I'd always, of course, been very conscious of the fact that we were not working on our own, that we were working in an environment where I always felt that the political actions of the United States Government were about 90 percent of the ball game and the Information Agency was about 10 percent. We could not punch the Arabs in the nose and tell them we loved them. So that when the time came for my overseas assignment -- usually, you were in Washington three or four years, which I was at that time -- someone in the Near Eastern Division of the State Department came to me and asked me how I would like to go to Beirut as political officer at the embassy there. It was Sam Kopper, who, at that time, was the deputy chief of the Near Eastern Division. Having entered the ranks of the career Foreign Service in 1948, I was quite delighted that they were considering shifting me over into the political field. A fellow named Dick Sanger had been out there and had done a very, very good job. So I said, "Of course, I'd be pleased to go." So we transferred to Beirut in 1952.

When I arrived in Beirut the situation was fairly stable, although there was one issue that was very active. That issue was the question of the presidency. The president at the time was a man named Sheikh Bishara al-Khouri. He had become the first president when Lebanon got full independence in 1943. The constitution prescribed that a president should be in power for six years only and then would have to retire. When his six years were up, everybody said that he was such a fine man -- the George Washington of Lebanon, in effect -- that he should continue in his work.
So a big political division developed, most of the people feeling that when a chief is doing a good job, you keep him in there unless he dies or somebody else knocks him off. I call it the tribal mentality. So that was what happened. In 1949, the parliament had voted to keep Sheikh Bishara in power for another term. But there was a minority of the people who didn't like the idea, eight members of parliament in particular who opposed the ad hoc revision of Lebanon's constitution.

Those were eight rather prominent politicians, one of them being Camille Chamoun, another being

Pierre Edde, another Ghassan Tweini, and five others. Keeping up an unrelenting campaign, they got considerable play in the newspapers, stressing that this was all illegal. Furthermore, they attacked what they considered some corruptive practices within the Sheikh Bishara regime.

Q: *Were these people all candidates themselves for president?*

MEYER: No, but one of them, Camille Chamoun, did become president in September of 1952 when, thanks to the opposition's constant agitation, they were able to stir up the bulk of the Lebanese people and to close all the shops and close down Beirut. At that time Sheikh Bishara called in General Fuad Chehab, head of the army, and asked, "Can we put this down?" General Chehab said, "Sure, we can put it down." Bishara said, "Will it cost any blood?" The general said, "Certainly, some people will get hurt." The President concluded, "Well, if it costs blood, this chair is not worth my sitting in it."

Q: *I think all of those people you mentioned were Christians. What about the Muslim elements?*

MEYER: Oh, no. They were not all Christians. I don't recall all eight of them, but one of them was Abdullah Haj, a Shiite member of the parliament. There were also a Greek Orthodox and an Armenian Orthodox. So they weren't all candidates because you had to be a Maronite Christian to be president. That requirement had been established in an unwritten agreement in 1943, called "The National Covenant."

Q: *Right. How did the Muslims feel about Bishara al-Khouri? Were they happy to have him continue?*

MEYER: Some were and some weren't. Some were quite ambitious, particularly the Sunni Muslims, who according to The National Covenant were the only ones entitled to be Prime Minister. Saeb Salam was one of those with aspirations. He was a very bright and talented person, a great friend of all of us. Sheikh Bishara, at the last minute, called him in to be Prime Minister, but it only lasted three days before the shops were closed down. The President then called in General Chehab to serve as interim head of the government. Chehab promptly conducted the election in which only members of parliament vote and Camille Chamoun came out the winner.

But that was a precedent that, I'm afraid, has foreshadowed trouble in Lebanon every time a new president is supposed to be elected. There are always those who feel the old one is a good one and why throw him out. Others say no, the constitution says six years, let's get a new one in. It's a problem that blew up at that time and Sheikh Bishara did lose his job, but he went down calmly and, I think, with a great deal of distinction.

Q: *Who were the major influences as far as foreign countries were concerned? France? Britain? U.S.? Egypt?*

MEYER: I would say that the United States had some influence at that time, although the French probably had a little bit more, the British a little bit. But, actually, the Lebanese were mostly concentrating on their own internal problems. You must remember that Lebanon is a collection of

religious minorities. All those minorities have both centrifugal forces and centripetal forces. They have a chronic tendency to fight with each other, but when the chips are down, they have increased determination to keep the country going because each minority has a vested interest in not being taken over by some strong power from outside. So I think, as far as influence is concerned at that time, it was mostly the Lebanese handling their own problems. I don't think anybody told them what to do as such. Our ambassador, when I was there, was Harold Minor. I don't recall that he made any strong interventions. The French, of course, had a traditional influence, due to cultural institutions and their having been the mandatory power after World War I and until 1943.

An interesting point in connection with your question was that, at that time, we had just started an AID program. It was called Point Four, "Nochte Rubah." That became quite a political issue because of questions such as who was going to get the money, where would it be spent, and for what kinds of projects. In the meantime, our AID people came out in droves. They overwhelmed the housing situation in Beirut to the consternation even of some Lebanese, let alone foreigners who were seeking housing.

Q: *As I recall, we had something like two or three ambassadors out there at one time, didn't we?*

MEYER: That's right. I forget which president it was, whether it was Truman or Eisenhower, but a special man was sent out to be ambassador for the region. His mission was to coordinate our AID programs and see that everything was being done properly. Eddie Lock was his name and he was based in Beirut. This produced some jealousy and problems as to who would sit at the right of the president and so on, protocol problems. It was not a very good way to handle business. The ambassador in the country should be the one in charge.

Q: *What was your role, Ambassador, at that point?*

MEYER: Head of the political section at that time and, as such, was following the political scene very carefully. A great deal of time was spent visiting with the various politicians and religious leaders, representatives of the wide array of minorities in Lebanon. It seems to me, and did at that time, that Lebanon is like a fishbowl. All the political and religious leaders are swimming around and you've got to know them all, know their colors, know which way they're going, and develop good relations with all of them.

I think one of the great mistakes we have made in times past is we have tended to side with the Christian half of Lebanon. Quite frequently our ambassadors do that. The French-speaking, elite Christian group is naturally attractive.

I made quite a point, thanks to a young man we had in our political section, a local named Haleem Mamari, to work the Muslim side of the street even more than the Christian side. I figured the Christians would be with us in any case, but the Muslims were the ones who were usually unhappy and restive. I tried to stay in touch and develop trust and confidence with them, as well as with the Christian elements.

Q: *That meant for a pretty active life, I should think, trying to cover all of these bases?*

MEYER: It did. And we'd be going out every afternoon or morning visiting somebody, as well as, occasionally, government people. We had some rather interesting events happen. Once a French ship broke down off shore near the beach, a couple of hundred meters off shore. It was a horrifying experience with some loss of life. During that time we worked closely with the French and tried to provide what little American military help we could.

A more exciting occasion was when Middle East Airlines had sold too many tickets for the Hajj down in Saudi Arabia. For the first time in many years the Turkish Government was allowing its Muslims to go to Mecca. Middle East Airlines saw a wonderful market. It brought hundreds of these Hajjis from Turkey down to Beirut but couldn't get them into Jeddah.

We came up with a beautiful idea. We said, "Hey, these people are all stuck here and they won't get down to Saudi Arabia by the time the Hajj really starts. Can't we do something about it?" So we sent a telegram to the American military in Germany. Within 24 hours, 14 American C-54 aircraft had arrived at Beirut Airport. They would fly off to Jeddah, one every hour on the hour, taking a plane load of Hajjis down there. That made a great hit with the Muslims. It was called the Mecca Airlift. It was the kind of effort that, in diplomacy, can score a lot of points sometimes.

Q: *A clever idea. Whose idea was that?*

MEYER: Oh, we generated it in the embassy.

Q: *At that time, did we have any intelligence operations there? Any CIA? Or was it a base for that later on?*

MEYER: Oh, of course, we had CIA representation there. My memory is a little hazy, but they were not all that active. Whether Lebanon was a regional base or not, I don't know. I wasn't very much involved, as I recall, with what they were up to. Later on, on my second tour, I got more acquainted with their activities.

Q: *Did we have fleet visits at that time?*

MEYER: Oh, yes. I'm glad you mentioned that. That was one of the nicest things we had in Lebanon in those days. The Sixth Fleet would come to visit Lebanon periodically. It would be an occasion when we could pull the whole American community together. Remember, there were many Americans living there. It was such a delightful place to live that many companies had their regional offices there so we had a very large American community. Many of our government regional offices were in Beirut so we had many government people there.

We'd get the whole American community together to sponsor a canteen at the Phoenicia Hotel. Daughters would come to the evenings and they'd be properly chaperoned and the sailors would come from the Fleet on leave. It was a wonderful occasion and all the Navy boys looked forward to it. Of course, we at the embassy also looked forward to it because of the opportunity to bring the American community together. Also to demonstrate the presence or the nearness of American military support in case it should ever be needed.

Q: *So you think they had some political effect and benefit?*

MEYER: Yes. There were those who criticized it by saying America was trying to throw its weight around. But I think most Lebanese, realizing that Lebanon is a very vulnerable country, were pleased to have the Sixth Fleet off shore. We would take President Chamoun and the Prime Ministers to visit the battleships and carriers. It was a thrill for them particularly the gun salutes and other honors which the Navy does so well.

Q: *Did the Lebanese at that time look upon the Sixth Fleet and the United States as a protector at all, or were they still looking to France or someone else?*

MEYER: Oh, no. That was in 1952. Later on in 1958 we did actually land in Lebanon when there was a civil war at that time. In 1952 it hadn't quite reached the point where they sought support from the Sixth Fleet, no.

Q: *At the time you were in Beirut, was it a financial center or did that develop later?*

MEYER: It's always been a financial center for the Middle East. I think ever since the Phoenicians invented money people on those rocky hills have known how to deal with it and to take advantage of it. At that time, to my recollection, there was considerable money in Beirut, it being a regional center. Many of the sheikhs and people from the Arab states on the gulf, the oil countries, would come to Lebanon for the summer and visit. Actually, quite a number of marriages would take place there, and so on. So there was much money coming into Lebanon from the oil wealthy states and the banking system flourished. So it was a regional center, fiscally, yes. One day I asked my good friend, George Hakim, then Foreign Minister, whether Lebanon was not worried as oil rich Arabs came to Lebanon and bought its properties, from villas, to land, to hotels and banks. He smiled, "They can't carry it away." Lebanon in those days was a capitalistic citadel.

Q: *We're nearing the end of this little bit on the first tour in Lebanon. Would you give any advice to someone going out to Lebanon? Not now because, as we know, the situation is rather unattractive, but normally, what would you advise the young diplomat to do when he goes out to Beirut? How should he conduct himself? What should be his main focus when he goes out there? Do you have any advice to give him?*

MEYER: My advice would be, as I indicated earlier, to maintain contact with every, every element of the Lebanese society. Later on, I'm getting ahead of myself, when President Kennedy sent me to Lebanon, I emphasized publicly that he had sent me as ambassador to all of Lebanon, not just one section of it. I think the important thing is to maintain contact with all elements of the Lebanese society so America can have their respect, their confidence, and can play a role when the time is needed.

In December [1991], I was asked to serve as Ambassador to Lebanon. Having deep roots there from my earlier service as Chief of the Political Section, my response was affirmative, without any

reluctance.

THOMAS C. SORENSEN
Information Officer, USIS
Beirut (1952-1956)

Thomas C. Sorensen was born in Nebraska in 1926. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in 1947. His overseas posts included Beirut and Cairo. Mr. Sorensen was interviewed in 1990.

SORENSEN: I had earlier met a fellow Nebraskan, Charlie Arnot, who was then head of IPS, the press service, and so I applied. Things moved very slowly in those days and maybe they still do. The full field clearance took a long time, but in November of 1951, I joined the Service. I had earlier been told that my assignment would be Baghdad, as Information Officer, but the Information Officer in Beirut had the misfortune to be married to the sister of the British spy McLean so the poor man was dismissed from the Service as a "security risk." As a consequence, luckily for me, I got the assignment in Beirut and, after a Washington orientation period, went with my wife, Mary, and nearly two-year-old daughter, Ann, to Beirut, in January 1952.

Q: *Tom, is it also true that you once had a student while you were back at Nebraska, Johnny Carson?*

SORENSEN: Yes, I taught two courses in that period -- I was a graduate student and also working for the newspaper and then the radio station -- two courses at the School of Journalism: the basic "Beginning Journalism," and "Radio Journalism," which was compulsory for speech majors. Carson was a speech major, an amiable fellow earning his way through college by putting on magic shows in church basements. I liked his style, so after I applied at USIA, I tried to get him to come to KLMS as Assistant News Director. He thought about it and told me a couple of days later that no, he thought he'd like to try to break into the big time and go to the Coast. I said that I thought that was immature and so on, but I did offer Carson, as I recall, $35 a week, a little bit less than he gets now.

Q: *Thank you, sir. Now, would you kindly elaborate a little bit on the kind of assignments you had with USIA first, starting with Beirut and then going on to your service in Baghdad and subsequently Egypt, and then back in Washington, where you were controlling some of the operations in the Near East and comment on the relationship of that work that you did at that time to the foreign policy of the United States, the usefulness of this whole endeavor to the United States?*

SORENSEN: In Beirut, my first boss was a gentleman named Winfield Hancock Lyon, Jr., who, I believe, was a political appointee, non-career. When the Democrats lost the 1952 election, Lyon lost his job, and I had the wonderful good fortune to have you, Larry, come down from Turkey and become PAO in September 1953. Our Ambassador, Ray Hare had a very high respect for you, as you will recall. He also had a high respect for the USIS function. When I say "high," I mean

relative to other Foreign Service Officers of his age and era, which wasn't to say tremendously high. He felt it was a peripheral, but useful activity. So, I found working with you extremely enjoyable, and
with the Cultural Affairs Officers at the time, Mildred Vardaman, and later John Nevins. I was in Beirut for four years before being transferred to Washington for Arabic language training.

LAWRENCE J. HALL
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Beirut (1953-1955)

Lawrence J. Hall was born in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1920. He attended New York University and the University of Wisconsin. Mr. Hall was interviewed by Hans N. Tuch on August 23, 1988.

HALL: I told him that if I survived the sorting out, I wanted to be a Deputy PAO in a large post or a PAO in a small post. In about a month, a cable came in saying, "Report to Beirut, September 17th." I told him that if I survived the sorting out, I wanted to be a Deputy PAO in a large post or a PAO in a small post. In about a month, a cable came in saying, "Report to Beirut, September 17th."

Q: *This was 1953?*

HALL: 1953, right.

Q: *So, you were in on the creation of USIA?*

HALL: That is right. I was the first PAO under USIA There were, I think about eight or nine officers out on the tarmac to meet me when we arrived. Half of them had RIF notices in their pockets, since this was a time of changeover. Tom Sorensen was there and he was my Information Officer. Tom later was appointed Deputy Director of the Agency by the Kennedy Administration.

Q: *Tom was already in the service at that time?*

HALL: He was, yes. He came in when USIS was under State. I think he had been there for a year, maybe a year and a half.

Q: *In Beirut?*

HALL: In Beirut. When we arrived there, the former PAO had already been let out and Mildred Vardaman, the CAO and a wonderful person, was the acting PAO. Mildred took charge right away and took charge of me.

DWIGHT DICKINSON

Political Officer
Beirut (1954-1956)

Ambassador Dwight Dickinson was born in Maryland in 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Ambassador Dickinson joined the Foreign Service in 1945. His career included positions in Mexico City, Curacao, Beirut, Rabat, Paris, and an ambassadorship to Togo. Ambassador Dickinson was interviewed in 1988 by Thomas S. Gates.

DICKINSON: 1954-56 was really a very peaceful time in Lebanon. The seeds of the disaster which has befallen Lebanon were there. As I'm sure you know, the Chamber of Deputies was elected on the basis of a confessional membership, that is, there would be a certain number of Christian Maronites, a certain number of Greek Orthodox, a certain number of Shia, a certain number of Sunnis, a certain number of Druze -- even two or three Armenian deputies. This was based on a census that had been taken sometime before 1954, maybe 1948 -- I'm not sure -- I shouldn't even mention the date, I don't know when it was, and it was based on the number of Christian Lebanese who existed, I believe, and it probably included many who lived outside the country. (Note: I have checked this point, since saying the above, and find that this political mosaic was based on the "National Pact" of 1943.) At that time there were more Christian Lebanese living than Muslim Lebanese. I don't know whether that's true now, but many of them lived outside the country. Lebanon was unable ever to have another census; it was unwilling and unable to face another census. This resulted in the Maronite Christians having the presidency; this was assigned to them. The Sunnis having the Prime Ministership. The Shia the Speakership, and as I remember, at that time the Druze had to have the Minister of Defense, or Minister of War. I think that may have changed but that was the way it was then.

The other aspect of Lebanon that already existed in '54-'56 was the presence of some 70,000 to 90,000, as I remember, Palestinian refugees who had fled there in 1948. They had confidently intended to return to Palestine after the Arab armies had defeated the Israelis, the Jews. That, of course, never happened; it never has. They were just sitting there, doing nothing, bearing children. The Lebanese were making no effort to integrate them; no other country was interested in them. The children, as I say, were beginning to be born -- the children that must now have children who were born in camps. Nothing was done for them except through the United Nations Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA), to which we were the largest contributor by far, as I recall.

Q: *Excuse me. Would you spell out that UNWRA?*

DICKINSON: Yes. Its UNRWA and I believe its the United Nations Relief & Works Agency. I'm glad you clarified that.

The result of all this is that after the years and years in a way of neglect the Palestinians didn't want to be integrated; the other Arabs, the Lebanese, and others, didn't want to integrate them. But as a result they've had nothing to do but grow up in these camps filled with hatred, and we see the result today. Lebanon also, because of its many sects and parties, became a very weak country and therefore a fertile ground for the Palestinians to develop their own resistance in. I won't go any

farther with that because there are so many people that are going to be interviewed in this system who know a great deal more about it than I; but I'm recalling the seeds of this, and it was the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, I'm convinced, which brought about the destruction of government in Lebanon. (Note: Although I failed to say so, the disintegration of authority in Lebanon finally came about when the PLO leadership and military, driven out of Jordan by King Hussein, moved to Lebanon and established themselves in the already festering refugee camps.)

CLAUDE G. ROSS
Political Officer
Beirut (1954)

Ambassador Claude G. Ross was born in Illinois in 1917. He received a bachelor's degree in foreign service from the University of Southern California in 1939 and joined the Foreign Service in 1940. His career included positions in Mexico, Ecuador, Greece, New Caledonia, Lebanon, Egypt, Guinea, Haiti, Tanzania, and was ambassador to Central African Republic, Haiti, and Tanzania. Ambassador Ross was interviewed in 1989 by Horace G. Torbert.

ROSS: Then in late 1954 I was transferred. I was in a session at the United Nations in the Committee on Information from Non-self-governing Bodies when I was called to the telephone and found out that the Department wanted to send me to Beirut.

I had been living under the misapprehension, as it turned out, that I was going to go to Strasbourg to cover the Council of Europe. But they decided not to send me there; they sent me as head of the political section in Beirut.

Q: *On the whole, I would say you got a more interesting job.*

ROSS: I think I did, yes. I was not disappointed a bit at the way that turned out at all.

Q: *So off you went to Beirut.*

ROSS: Off I went to Beirut.

Q: *By this time, did you have children in school? You were moving right in the middle of a school year.*

ROSS: Right. I might say that when we were in Nouméa, we put our older son, the one who is now ambassador in Algeria, into French school. He was seven years old. He went into it cold, not knowing a word of French. He really had an awfully rough time the first two months. After that, he and the son of the director of the French school, who was in the same class, alternated as number one or two in the class for the rest of the time. He came out of Nouméa being trilingual in English, French, and Greek. We had a Greek nursemaid at the same time.

I went out to Beirut as head of the political section, a two-officer section apart from our adjunct from across the Potomac. I had Pierre Graham as my number-two in the section. When I got there, Armin Meyer was Chargé d'Affaires, but left about three months later. Then Ambassador Heath came and was there for the remainder of my time in Beirut.

Beirut was a truncated assignment for me, but I served there for a year and a half, and it was a fascinating place, in many respects a political officer's dream. You had no problem getting people to talk to you or having sources. The problem was to refine what you got, to evaluate it, and put it in perspective, because everybody there, without exception, who gave you information, was grinding his or her axe.

Q: *I had a somewhat similar experience in Rome a few years after this.*

ROSS: It was a fascinating place. Another dimension that made it fascinating was that the political arrangements in Beirut had a confessional basis. In other words, the posts in the government all were allotted according to your religion. The president was a Maronite Christian; the prime minister was a Sunni Muslim; the head of the Parliament was a Shia Muslim; the minister of defense was a Druze; the head of security was a Maronite Christian. The whole Cabinet was divided along these lines. The Greek Orthodox also had their input as did the Greek Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Armenian Catholics -- in the Cabinet or in the Parliament or in both.

I had to keep in touch with the leaders of these religious communities. I knew Patriarch Meouchi, who eventually became a cardinal because the Maronite church was in communion with Rome, and I knew the heads of all of the others. It was fascinating to travel around the country and meet them, talk to them, and then try to explain to the Department what was happening in the various communities.

Q: *You were there before it really started to seriously break down?*

ROSS: The thing was going well then, as well as that kind of an arrangement could go. But the frailties were apparent because you could see that this allotment of power was highly artificial. There was a gentlemen's agreement in 1943, when the country became self-governing before independence. This allotment was based then on the last census that had been taken in 1932. So it was out of date, but it was on the basis of this census that the Christian element was deemed a majority. Obviously it was to the Christian advantage to keep it that way, but the suspicion if not the belief was widespread that the situation had changed. Recognition of this likelihood had led the government to enfranchise all Lebanese living abroad to vote in their presidential and parliamentary elections, because most of the Lebanese abroad were Christian and therefore could be counted on to swell the Christian vote. This artificial arrangement was frail and out of date, and we knew that sooner or later, people were going to become dissatisfied. There was already some of that. We knew that the Shia were the most disaffected ones, because considering their numbers, they came out on the short end. Economically, they had the short end of the stick. The Sunnis were in much better place economically and socially.

The other thing was, of course, that we had these Palestinian refugee camps. You didn't have to be clairvoyant to know that if this situation continued, you were going to have an explosion, because conditions in the camps were simply deplorable. You could see what was going to happen if you had a whole generation that were raised in this kind of a situation, with no hope for a solution.

Some of the Palestinians did very well, the professional people -- for example, doctors, lawyers, wealthy ones. They integrated into Lebanese society, found jobs, and were successful to the point where there was a certain amount of jealousy in some areas.

Q: *They were very intelligent people.*

ROSS: Yes. So you could see where trouble could coalesce and begin to operate there.

Q: *Meanwhile, it was still a good place to live.*

ROSS: It was a fabulous place, yes, with a terribly heavy social schedule. We were out every night. We drew the line at Sunday, because otherwise we had not much time to spend with the boys. At that point we had a German governess.

Q: *So they were adding German to their languages?*

ROSS: Not really, because she spoke English fairly well.

We had this tremendous social schedule, two and three cocktail parties every night, dinner practically every night, and it was really fantastic. We has constant access to the people who were doing the ruling on both the Christian and the Muslim sides.

Q: *Do you have any particular comments on Heath as a chief of mission?*

ROSS: From my standpoint, I found him very supportive and a very good chief to work for. He certainly had us in on lots and lots of his high-level social engagements. Most of the people involved we knew anyway, but we were able to further these contacts and were of use to him. He and his wife both played the piano. There was one grand piano in the embassy residence, and they brought one with them, so they had side-by-side grand pianos nested there, and they would play piano duets.

I had John Emerson then as the DCM, who was an excellent man.

Q: *I knew John a little later, when he was in Paris for a while.*

ROSS: Heath ;and Emmerson were very good to me and, I think, probably responsible for the fact that my assignment there was truncated because it was through their good offices and support that I was assigned to the 1956-57 War College class.

Q: *Which happens to be the year after I was there in 1955-56.*

ROSS: You were there, then, with Bob Moore.

Q: *Yes.*

ROSS: We had a truncated session there. I was there a year and a half. I had gone out there with the serious intention of trying to learn Arabic. I might just say that I came into the Foreign Service wanting to be an Arabist, but as you know, I came in in 1940, and up to that point we had always sent our would-be Arabists to Paris to Ecole des Langues Orientales. That, of course, ceased with the German occupation of Paris and the war conditions. So there was no opportunity to learn Arabic. I did take a few lessons in Mexico City at my first post. But my teacher, who professed to be a Syrian priest, a Christian priest, after a few lessons, (my wife and I were taking these together), asked us so many questions about what we were doing, that we thought there was something a little funny. We broke it off. Much later back in Washington, I read in the press that this guy had been picked up as a Gestapo agent. (Laughs) So there you are.

The point is that I had no Arabic prior to coming to Beirut. I wanted to learn some. I did take a few lessons, but then I was too busy, really, to give it the kind of attention it deserved, and I discovered that everybody I talked to there either spoke English or French or both, and they were not interested in hacking around with me in Arabic. So there really was not that kind of opportunity. From that standpoint, I was a little disappointed. Otherwise, Beirut was a great assignment and prepared me for future assignments and for understanding some of the things that were happening when I was at the War College and the Suez Crisis broke out.

Q: *For anybody who had been in that part of the world, that was a very exciting year.*

ROSS: It was. I was the only one in the class from the Middle East, so I spent a lot of time talking to not just my State Department colleagues, but, more importantly, the military there about what was going on. After a while, it was sort of overshadowed by the Hungarian thing.

JOAN SEELYE
Spouse of FSO in Arabic Language Study
Beirut (1955-1956)

Mrs. Seelye was born and raised in Connecticut and educated at Skidmore College. She accompanied her husband, Foreign Service Officer Talcott Seelye on his diplomatic assignments in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Tunisia and Syria. Her husband served as US Ambassador to Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria. Mrs. Seelye was interviewed by Jewell Fenzi in 2010.

SEELYE: Jordan was a short assignment of about two years, and then from there, we – oh, then my husband decided he definitely wanted to be an Arabist. Our next assignment was Beirut where we had a big language school. The British had their language school up in the mountains. We had ours in Beirut. So he did a year, having already had some Arabic study there on his own in Amman.

Beirut was quite like heaven after coming from Amman. Beirut is a gorgeous place and we had a delightful year there. Of course, eventually, years later my husband went back to Beirut in the 1980's, when our ambassador and economic counselor were assassinated. At the time, my husband was Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and he was in the Congo on a trip when he was called back by the department to go to Beirut to get the American ex-pats safely out of Beirut. There was a huge American community there. I didn't go with him that time. Even though we only had had one year there the rest of our lives I was always going up to Beirut. It was like going to New York from here. You just had to go. And, as soon as you stepped off the plane from Jeddah or Kuwait or wherever, you felt like a woman again. It was just wonderful. There was the sea and there wasn't anything you couldn't buy there plus great restaurants and friendly people and cultural activities.

SLATOR CLAY BLACKISTON, JR.
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1957-1958)

Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr. was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Mr. Blackiston joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Port-au-Prince, Jerusalem, Tunis, Jeddah, Cairo, Amman, and Calcutta. He was also a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations in 1971. Mr. Blackiston was interviewed in 1992 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *You left the desk in 1957 and you did what?*

BLACKISTON: I went to the Arabic language school in Beirut.

Q: *How did you find the training at the language school?*

BLACKISTON: I thought it was pretty good. I wished I had been younger when I had gone there. We had a guy named Frank Rice who was the head of the school and we all liked him quite well. Incidentally in that group were Cleo Noel, Curt Moore, and Earl Russell, all of whom have been killed, Les Pope, who died of a choking accident. We were for the most part quite a congenial group. We were in an apartment building and the lease ran out; Frank Rice had been appealing to the Administrative Officer of the Embassy to do something about it. He sent a cable, I don't know why they didn't catch it, which said something to the effect of, "Closing Arabic language school. Lease is out, no place to go." Well this gets to the Department and gets to Loy Henderson's desk, Under Secretary of Administration, and I guess somebody just blew a fuse. They sent out the head of the Foreign Service Institute, or head of Language Training I guess it was, and they removed Rice from his position. Now they didn't have anybody to run the school, so they look around and they name me as head of the school! Student and head. In the meantime we have this civil war breaking out in Lebanon. The Ambassador is Rob McClintock, and one thing leads to another and he tells us to close the school. They assign us to all sorts of things, even answering the

switchboard. Among other things we were sent out in cars to go around Lebanon, we had two-way radios in the trunk which was a silly thing to do, to check ostensibly on the situation of Americans -- a lot of Lebanese that had gone back to their villages. We had all these cards with the names, and on one occasion I and Les Pope, who was a black officer, were driving east of Tripoli. We crossed the Nahr Barin, which is the Cold River, and I think we were in the wrong area. I knew we were in the wrong area when I tell you this story. We come up out of this valley and there is this guy sitting under an olive tree with a bandoleer on and a coke container -- you know one of those things they sell coke out of; ice chest -- and a field telephone. To get the situation in Lebanon at this time -- we had UN observers, a different outfit, because of the charge that the Syrians were infiltrating people, communists. In the meantime in Iraq Nuri Said had been killed, King Faisal had been killed; Jordan and Iraq had been in a union and they had killed some of the Ministers from the joint government. So the place was sort of falling apart.

Q: *We are talking about the killing of Nuri Said and the King, July 14, 1958.*

BLACKISTON: Yes. Anyway there was the government and the opposition; the opposition wasn't all Muslim; there were Christians in Muarida as they call it. Where we were was where there was this Christian opposition, in the Zagharta District which is a bloody area of ex-President Suleiman Franjieh, who was a murderer; he shot people in a church. This guy stops us and I gave him a song and dance in Arabic that we were looking for people, American citizens. "Well you can't go on," he said, "you've got to check with the commandant." Then he looks at Les and says, "Is he really an American." "He's really American," I say and get to talking with this guy and it turns out, he was fairly old, that he had been in the U.S. Army with Pershing chasing Pancho Villa in Mexico. All these crazy things happened in Lebanon. Some guy comes down from the "commandant" and we go up to his village; the commandant has a real nice house and he is a lawyer, French trained. All these guys with weapons are sitting around the room; they didn't like the looks of us at all. But they offered us some tea and cookies and finally let us go. I could tell more about this, but would you like me to tell you about the American landings?

Q: *Yes.*

BLACKISTON: I played a direct role in that. Let me back up here: there was the Eisenhower Doctrine, Chamoun was the President; to get American intervention it had to be authorized by the Lebanese cabinet. So Chamoun writes up this authorization which is signed by three or four cabinet members, not all the cabinet, and sends it over to the Embassy; it is in hand written Arabic which is pretty hard to read unless you are good at it. They send it down to the Arabic language school to be translated -- exactly what does it say? We xerox this thing and cut it up into pieces and one group of students take one piece and another group another piece and so forth. Of course we had to ask the instructors from time to time, without telling them what we were doing, what does this word mean; it really was funny. We finally get the thing translated. Then the marines land, they come up...I mean they come up off the coast off the airport. The head of the Lebanese Army is a General Shehab, that is a famous family in Lebanon that have been everything from Christians to Muslims to Druze; he's a Christian at this time. Now there is a defection in the so-called armor of the Lebanese Army and they have got these tanks lined up on the airport road; they are lined up just beyond the corniche. So I am asked to go out there with Bob Funseth, he was in the political section but he wasn't an Arabist, and an assistant army attaché, and I was the Arabist. So we go out

and I met this tank, it is sitting up in the road there just off the corniche where you turn, not far from the sea. We want to find out what these guys are going to do because the marines are getting ready to come in, hit the beach. So I climb up on this tank and I talk to this guy and give him a song and dance about how we are here to protect the sovereignty of Lebanon -- that was the line. He says, "I know, I know, my cousin is in the American Navy." So I said, "What are your orders?" "Oh," he says, "we get them from the Qiaba.," that's the headquarters. "But what are they?"...I never got it out of him. That was the end of that. So we go on down and here comes this line of Marines in amphibious vehicles coming with some officers in jeeps, all with bullet proof vests -- I've got my seersucker suit on. We stopped this column, the assistant army attaché was with us, coming from the airport -- there is a refugee camp alongside the airport on the east side and these people are not happy. So we stop them and tell them they can't go on because we don't know but what the Lebanese Army ahead might fire. So we stopped. You know Bob Murphy was sent out there.

Q: *He was the troubleshooter in North Africa and was called " Foreign Service."*

BLACKISTON: Yes, like Loy Henderson. Well I guess they weren't too sure about McClintock, so...

Q: *One got the feeling that McClintock was opposed to the landings, wasn't he?*

BLACKISTON: That I don't know; I was in the language school and played no role other than what I am telling you. I wasn't functioning in the Embassy though the language school was in the Embassy. Maybe that was the reason, maybe you are right. Anyhow they sent Bob Murphy out there. The next thing that happened was that McClintock and Murphy and General Shihab go into this house down the road; I wasn't there, I was a hundred yards down the road and we're stopped there waiting to see what would happen. In the meantime there is this refugee camp and the column is sort of sitting there. I said, "Look, I think you ought to move some armor or something over here off the side of the road to give you a little protection because of this refugee camp." Well I don't think they thought much of this coming from a civilian; so they didn't do anything. After this powwow of about an hour they seemed to resolve this problem. McClintock goes back to the Embassy and I think he told the reporters that he led the troops into the port, but that's not true; the troops led themselves into the port and they took up various positions around the city. That was the end of that. Now I could go on about another aspect. Is this interesting?

Q: *This is interesting, yes. Let me stop here and move to a different tape.*

BLACKISTON: I also made a trip way down into southern Lebanon, the same idea as the one I told you about into northern Lebanon. That's a Shia'a area, as it is today. But the Shia'a were really downtrodden, that was part of the problem; they weren't getting any schools or development. There were a lot of Americans living there; they had grocery stores in Detroit or something and they were very friendly to us, no problem at all. Of course that is dangerous area today. So much for that.

Another situation was that we heard there were some missionaries north of Tripoli. Tripoli is in the northern part of the country and there is a big refugee camp outside of Tripoli, and we heard that

the refugees were all out on the road raising hell, blocking the road so that the missionaries couldn't get to Beirut. They wanted to get to Beirut. There were two seismic testing ships -- oil exploration testing; they weren't big, they might have been 150 feet long -- that had been out in the Gulf. They were going wherever they were going and they put into Beirut. The Ambassador apparently asked for authority to commandeer them and that is exactly what he did. The idea was that I and an officer named Silver would go on one of these ships and we would try to make contact with the missionaries and bring them back on the ship to Beirut. So we steam up the coast and go to Al Mina, Mina means port in Arabic; it is where the IPC (Iraq Petroleum Company) refinery is. I am a little vague on this but for some reason we picked up some IPC employees that were boatmen and I am a little vague as to what we did. We must have gone up the coast, maybe pulling these boats behind us. I get in the boat with the boatmen and we row towards the shore. We approach the shore and there are all these guys with rifles standing on the beach warning us off. So we saw that this was not very profitable so we go back. I have sort of forgotten how this happened but someplace along the line I get into Tripoli, find that the missionaries have gotten through this roadblock and are up there in Tripoli. As it seems there is no problem driving the road back to Beirut I charter some taxis, I think we had seven or eight people. We steam on down the road, sending the ships back by sea, and we all drive up to the Embassy. In the meantime, McClintock apparently has told the press about this sea rescue and I come back with the missionaries in the taxis. He was not happy.

Q: *I think that McClintock did enjoy publicity.*

BLACKISTON: Oh God! Well I'll tell you about the dog. He had this poodle. Also -- nobody had ever done this -- we had this guy, a Christian named Tewfiq, who was a kuwass. Do you know what a kuwass is?

Q: *Sort of a major-domo?*

BLACKISTON: In the Turkish times the consul had to have some protection; obviously he wouldn't want to be disturbed by the hoi polloi. So when he walked into the city the kuwass walked ahead. He wore these baggy pants and the fez and he had this staff -- we had a couple of staffs in Jerusalem; frankly I think one Ambassador stole one, not in Jerusalem but elsewhere. They were very nicely done -- from Turkish times -- of course we didn't use them then. Anyway he would walk ahead and say, "Make way, here comes the American Consul!" Tewfiq wore this crazy costume that dated from Ottoman times, and McClintock would take him with him everywhere he went, including this little poodle. On Lebanon Independence Day he took the dog with him in the reviewing stand for the troops. Well dogs -- Islam...

Q: *Dogs are considered unclean.*

BLACKISTON: Even the Christians there thought it was inappropriate. So he got a lot of bad publicity for that. There were so many funny things. There was one thing that just occurred to me. I think as far as Lebanon is concerned I might say that what happened next is that the problems in Lebanon diminished, thanks in large measure to the role of Bob Murphy. The shooting was small potatoes compared to what has happened in Lebanon in more recent years. However, there was a lot of shooting and there were some really terrible things that occurred. For instance there was

what we called the ABC store, it was sort of like a Woolworth's, in downtown Beirut. Some of the opposition must have hijacked a Pepsi-Cola truck, and they drove this truck up, this is in downtown Beirut, in front of the ABC store; they had it loaded with kerosene and some explosive device. They jumped out and set this thing off and it engulfed the store with flames and burned a whole bunch of the shoppers and clerks. They did a similar thing to a streetcar that blew up people all over the place. They have in Lebanon, and in many other Arab countries but particularly in Lebanon, a very peculiar practice if there is an accident. For instance there is a rail line going north, the train probably doesn't come but once a day but somehow a truck or something will happen to cross this track on the road going north to Tripoli and collide with the train; maybe a bus or something and people are killed. The bus driver runs up in the hills; he is afraid of blood feud revenge until his family can get in touch with the guy and work out some arrangement. A lot of that happened when I was there.

HOLSEY G. HANDYSIDE
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1957-1959)

Holsey G. Handyside was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1927. He attended Amherst College in Massachusetts, majoring in French and political science. Handyside received his B.A. in 1950, and went on to the University of Grenoble on a Fulbright Fellowship. He then attended the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University for two years, and received his M.P.A. in 1953. Mr. Handyside entered the Foreign Service in 1955. He served in Beirut, Baghdad, Tripoli and Mauritania. He was interviewed by C. Stuart Kennedy on April 19, 1993.

Q: Okay. Why don't we now go on to Beirut. You went to Beirut in 1957. This was Arabic training.

HANDYSIDE: The Foreign Service Institute's Arabic school at that point was in the Embassy building on the seashore in Beirut at the foot of the hill on which the American University was located. Language training was provided by Foreign Service Institute personnel, a couple of professional linguists who were Americans, leading a staff of Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese native speakers. The area studies part of the training was accomplished at that early stage by enrolling students in various courses at the American University of Beirut and requiring a fair amount of professional reading in terms of published materials about the Middle East.

Q: I think it is important to get a feel for this. In the first place how did you, looking back on it but even at the time, how did you react to the way the language was taught?

HANDYSIDE: I think that most of us had the sense that the approach was far too academic. The professional linguistic staffers who had been sent out there by the Foreign Service Institute had for all practical purposes only a very limited understanding of what the Foreign Service was all about and they were not very interested in that. They were interested in an analysis of the language, and the analysis of the process of teaching a foreign language to a group of Americans. Their emphasis was almost entirely on language learning as an end in itself, rather than as a tool to enhance the

pursuit of the diplomatic profession. So there was a problem of philosophical approach. There was also a problem in that...this was at the very beginning of this school... the professional staff was really swamped with producing pioneering type of teaching materials at the same time as it was trying to teach classes.

And so with these two sets of responsibilities in a fairly small restricted staff, I always had the feeling that the actual teaching process was sort of pushed off to the background, that the current crop of students somehow wasn't quite as important as the overall mission of preparing the intellectual foundations for this kind of school for the decades of the future.
And then finally the problem at the school was that we were existing in a bubbling, pulsating Middle East where our acquaintances on the Embassy staff were up to their ears in fighting the particular crisis that was going on. So it was awfully difficult to concentrate on learning a very difficult language when all of these other things of enormous professional interest and stimulation were going on all around us. And indeed it wasn't very long before the new Ambassador, Mr. McClintock, found it absolutely essential, given the numbers of people assigned to his mission and the kinds of people and the competence of the people assigned to the Embassy Beirut staff at that point, that he could no longer afford the luxury of having some 18 or 20 highly competent, middle and junior grade Foreign Service officers sitting around tables in part of his Embassy trying to concentrate on learning Arabic when the political situation in Lebanon was going to pot. So at about the time of the coup in Iraq, in July 1958, the Ambassador closed the school down and put us all to work doing other kinds of things.

Q: Well before we move to that, could you give an idea...the Foreign Service Arabist has been pegged, rightly or wrongly, a breed apart and all that. There has been either information or disinformation campaign to characterize the Arabist as being someone who is too prone to be in favor of Arab rights as opposed to Israeli rights, etc. Could you talk a bit about your students who went in there and what you were absorbing and where they were coming from?

HANDYSIDE: It is so long ago, Stu, I can't really remember where the student body had been before they came. I think it is possible, however, to comment on the sort of approach to the problem. Just as I described the academic bent of some of the management, there was in my group of perhaps ten or eleven an interesting spectrum of interests and motivation for learning. At one end were those students who were looking strictly for another tool that would enhance their professional capability as Foreign Service Officers. There were two or three people who really weren't very interested in language learning in terms of the language but were interested only in learning how to communicate with people in that part of the world in a way that was sufficiently effective so that it would enhance their professional qualifications as a reporting officer or an action officer. At the other end of the spectrum there were a couple of students who were clearly there because they were fascinated by language, delighted with the prospect of being paid to learn a difficult and very different language. There are very few links between Arabic and any of the modern European languages really. They saw this in very much the same way as a couple of the staff members did who saw teaching Americans to read and write and speak Arabic as an interesting intellectual challenge rather than part of the Foreign Service Institute's training program. Then there was the great bunch in the middle of which I was one. I was interested in language and in the intricacies of language but I had agreed to spend two years learning this very difficult language primarily because I thought this was a leg up in terms of professional

competence, professional development and competition in the Foreign Service. So there were a variety of kinds of people at the school.

Q: What were you getting from your teachers about .the overriding problems at that time, Nasserism, which you were going to get very involved with when you were let out of school, and also Israel?

HANDYSIDE: I think as far as the professional Arabists in the US government more broadly but certainly those in the State Department are concerned, that over the years they have been the subject of a bad rap. Certainly that is true as far as the people I know in this particular group of Foreign Service officers. The very strong stance these people take is, in effect, "a plague on both your houses." Intellectually, they were unhappy about perhaps some of the things that were going on in Israel or had gone on in Israel, but on a day-to-day basis they were having to deal with and exist with a group of usually inept, sometimes intellectually dishonest and almost always difficult people, that is, the typical Arab. My sense that the charge for any sort of personal preference or personal objective, that any of the Arabists had become pro-Arab or actively pro-Arab, I think is just the figment of the outsider's imagination. I suspect that this kind of attitude began or got started as a result of one of the characteristics of the supporters of Israel: that is if you are not 100 percent for us you are against us.

It has been very difficult, as far as I am concerned, over the years that I have been dealing with the Middle East, until very recently, to talk about Middle Eastern problems or issues in any kind of intellectually honest and objective fashion. Neither side wants to hear an intellectually accurate and objective analysis of a particular Middle Eastern conflict because it doesn't serve the interests of either the Arabs or the Israelis to have people thinking entirely objectively and systematically about the problems of the region. Both sides are much more interested in advocacy analysis that produces a product that says "See we told you that it was the Israelis," or "See we told you it was the Arabs" who were right. So my sense is that people from at least my experience, the people I have worked with in the Foreign Service who were Arabic language and area specialists, were all professionally objective. There were times when they would become exasperated by either the exponents of one side or the other, but in general, and certainly day in and day out they viewed the problems in terms of the United States. They viewed these problems in terms of Americans trying to intervene or trying to manage problems in a way that was going to uphold at least and to pursue the achievement of US national interests in the area.

I think that a number of these officers after retirement from the Foreign Service became outspoken partisans of one side or another. I have a number of my colleagues in mind when I make that statement, the people who have become articulate spokesmen of the Arab position. Intellectually, I think some of them at least have said, "Look, this is a body of information that has been inadequately articulated in the American press or in the American political arena and as ex-professionals in the State Department we really have a responsibility as well as a personal desire to go public and let people benefit from our years of experience in wrestling with these problems." There are some of my retired colleagues, I think, who have emotionally felt that the Arab side was disadvantaged for x number of years...

(When he closed the Language School, Ambassador McClintock put the students to work

monitoring the growing crisis posed by the first phase of the Lebanese civil war. We were tasked with gathering information in Beirut and with extending the Embassy's reach out into the Lebanese countryside under the guise of a series of consular trips aimed at assuring the welfare and safety of the large number of American citizens who were residents the length and breadth of Lebanon. Robert Chase and I made at least two such trips across the mountains into the Bekaa Valley. The following paragraph sets forth some of the political intelligence we gathered in between consular visitations. It addresses the question of the source of the arms and equipment being used by the rebels against the Lebanese Government.)

...that we were rubbing shoulders with people who spoke Arabic with a Syrian accent.. The United Nations never perceived this because they didn't have language officers. But it was immediately apparent to Chase and me that we were dealing with Damascus Arabs. The more we poked around and we found people we had some affinity with and could ask some questions of, we had a pretty good idea by the time we got back to Beirut of where the mule pack trains were coming across the mountains, what their frequency was and how much they could carry in a typical pack train. We had a pretty good idea of what the infiltration of small arms, mostly, into Lebanon from Syria was and when this was reported by the Embassy and it got read back to the UN staff in New York there was all sorts of brouhaha about this because the Norwegian general (in command of the UN observers) had categorically, both privately and publicly, said that it was not going on.

Q: When did McClintock close the school down and absorb you all?

HANDYSIDE: Some time very soon after the concert on the 8th of May.

Q: This was before the blow up in Iraq?

HANDYSIDE: Oh, yes.

Q: In the first place could you talk a little about how McClintock operated? He was one of our professional ambassadors but he is sort of a character in a way.

HANDYSIDE: Well this is another one of these occasions when one ambassador is measured by his predecessor. His predecessor was Ambassador Heath. And Ambassador Heath was primarily a Europeanist. My conclusion was that as far as Ambassador Heath was concerned, the only people in Lebanon who were important spoke either French or English. If they didn't speak French or English they weren't worth talking to because they couldn't possibly be doing anything important in terms of what was important to a foreign diplomat.

When McClintock arrived, he very astutely, quietly but very systematically began putting his antenna out to the entire Lebanese community. He did this in a very shrewd way. He recognized that after several years of American Embassy involvement only with the Christian community in Lebanon, other than the sprinkling of officials at the head of the Lebanese government who were "the duty Sunni" or duty Shiite," that he couldn't do this and have it be seen as entirely coming as an initiative of the US Ambassador.. So he made common cause with the gentleman who was then president of the American University of Beirut and with the man who was the president of the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line. These two gentleman began a systematic series of dinner parties to

which they invited people who were within their ambit. And then by happenstance, the American Ambassador would also be invited. So McClintock was systematically able to meet and talk to at length all of the leaders of the entire spectrum -- political and economic -- of Lebanon, thanks to the intervention of these two key figures in the American community.

Over time, what the Ambassador was doing became known within the journalist community. At one stage of the game, I don't remember what the occasion was, but it was probably around March or maybe April 1958, McClintock had a press conference. I guess it was perhaps his first official press conference after his arrival. The Lebanese press corps, which was predominantly Christian, went after him tooth and nail about the fact that the previous American Ambassador never had gone beneath him to talk to these awful people on the other side of the fence, "What do you think you are doing, Mr. Ambassador?" etc. This was the only time I saw McClintock get a little exasperated in a public fashion. He almost blew up at the press corps. What he said to them was, "I am not the Ambassador to the Christian community of Lebanon. I am the American Ambassador to Lebanon and it is my intention and my mission to talk to everybody in Lebanon regardless of their theological affiliation or any other group identification." And oh my, there was a brouhaha in the Beirut press that wouldn't go away for a better part of a week because the American Ambassador had made it very clear that he had changed the rules of the game. Clear that the American Ambassador was no longer in the pocket of the president of the republic and all of his fellow Christians.

McClintock, as far as I can recall, didn't know more than a half a dozen words of Arabic, but he very quickly got into the business of having an interpreter and talking to people who could communicate only in that language. He really, in a very professional way, reached out to the entire community. I am personally convinced that if the Ambassador had not done this, the Embassy would not have survived more than that first burst of internecine warfare within the city limits of Beirut, that is in early May. And the Embassy certainly would not have survived the second onslaught which came in July. I am firmly of the opinion -- I was then and still am now -- that if Donald Heath had still been the American Ambassador in Lebanon, the American government would have had no alternative but to evacuate the Embassy and close it down.

Q: You are talking about May, what were you doing? Where did they put you in the Embassy?

HANDYSIDE: Well, we continued to operate out of the physical premises of the school. The curriculum development activity that had been going on in the director's office continued to go on, but what had been going on in the language classroom stopped being a language lesson and started being the planning of a series of consular trips or whatever it was we were working on after the landing of the Marines and the 82nd Airborne (or the 101st, whichever it was).

Q: Which was late July...
HANDYSIDE: Well, no it was very soon after the 14th, I don't remember exactly. It was within three or four days.

Prior to that, I think I may have mentioned to you during our discussion of my extracurricular activities in Cairo, that as a result of the Suez Canal crisis, I had to learn something about radios. So we suddenly arrived on the verge of this major problem in Beirut and discovered that not very

much had been done in terms of evacuation planning or emergency contingency planning, etc. One of the things that hadn't been done was that none of the mobile radios which had been sent in by Washington, had ever been installed in any of the Embassy vehicles and the mobile central had never been installed in the communications section, and the antenna wasn't up on the roof, etc. So, once again, I guess because of my reputation of having done this once before, I got tagged by Ambassador McClintock. I still recall with a certain wry amusement that the afternoon that the Marines came across the beach and the 82nd Airborne came into the international airport of Beirut, I was down in the basement garage of the Embassy installing radios in Embassy automobiles.

Q: How was the Marine landing looked upon by the Embassy? I have a feeling that McClintock was not wild about this.

HANDYSIDE: McClintock was unhappy because he thought that this was recognition and admission of failure, certainly failure by the diplomats. But also because he had been told by the Christian head of the Lebanese military forces that if these foreign troops were introduced into the country the Lebanese armed forces would have no choice but to oppose them in military fashion. So one of the things that the Ambassador did in order to make sure that this didn't happen, he somehow got General Shihab, who was chief of the armed forces, into the American Ambassador's limousine and together they drove out along the airport where the Marines were coming in across the beach and where the Airborne troopers were landing. (The Airborne troops were all disappointed they couldn't drop in; they landed on the runways and off-loaded the airplanes with their parachutes still on their backs.) As the American military forces got enough equipment ashore and were ready to start moving in from the airport area north along the coastline to the city of Beirut, the military column was led into the city by the American Ambassador in his limousine accompanied by the chief of staff of the Lebanese military.

Q: And two poodles?

HANDYSIDE: One poodle. This was the way McClintock maneuvered this potentially explosive situation to make sure there wouldn't in fact be any shooting. Whatever the attitude of the men in the Lebanese military might have been about the arrival of these foreign military personnel, at least it wasn't going to disintegrate into a kind of foolish competition.

Subsequently, Stu, I think it became...one of the things that happened at the time...as the Marines came across the beach there was a whole bunch of little Lebanese kids who had Coca Colas to sell. They greeted the Marines as they waded ashore with, "Hey Jack, you want a coke?" And that was the spirit that sort of characterized the rest of it for the rest of the summer. The troops arrived around the 15th or 16th of July and stayed until the first week of October. There were some problems, but the populace understood that the American soldiers and marines didn't really want to be there, and they sure as hell were going to go back home. The Beirutis seem to have concluded that the U.S. troops were there to help them keep order in their house after they had demonstrated, left by themselves, they couldn't do that. I have some very vivid recollections of incidents that occurred during that period.

The one that I remember particularly, and I am not sure why there was a kind of movement of military into a downtown area in Beirut, but I have a very, very vivid recollection of columns of

soldiers marching down through these twisting narrow streets. The impact was made, not so much by the marching men, but the fact that two of the company commanders (mind you this was 1958) were black Americans. This really had a tremendous impact on the Lebanese. They had been subjected to all the propaganda that came out of the Voice of the Arabs from Cairo and had been coming at them from Moscow over Radio Moscow, that US society was disintegrating over the racial problem, etc. When these two bright, very professional looking young Army captains started stepping off down the middle of Beirut as the obvious commanding officers of these two Airborne companies, there was just no question of the impact that kind of thing made on the Lebanese population.

Q: Again we are trying to recreate the events of the time, what was the rationale and what was the purpose of our moving into Lebanon?

HANDYSIDE: Primarily, I think, just to put a cork in the bottle. Just put a lid on to make sure that changes that were going to take place would take place in some reasoned, systematic way after everybody who had an interest had been consulted and had an opportunity to express his or her point of view. To make sure that the Syrians, in particular, were not able simply by force of arms to extend the writ of the Syrian government through the Bekaa Valley to the Mediterranean shoreline.

After the arrival of the American military forces, the Embassy acquired an enormous additional set of responsibilities. It had to become the buffer between American military requirements, American military personnel and the government and people of Lebanon. So the former students in the FSI Arabic Language School, who had been co-opted earlier as the Ambassador's eyes and ears, were pressed into service as political-military people. I think almost all of us ended up with some assignment that had something to do with coping with this enormous set of problems which had been introduced by the arrival of several thousand military troops.

Two of us were tagged, Charles Ferguson and I, as the real estate team. Whenever the military would signify to the Embassy that they needed additional land area or facilities or buildings, Chuck Ferguson and I were the guys who would go out and help them find it and then negotiate our way through the miasma of private ownership and government permitting, etc. to make it possible for the military to have the facilities they said they needed in order to make their presence effective. This was a fascinating period. Ferguson and I were very much involved with dealing with all kinds of Lebanese property owners and landlords. One day we would be tasked to find an apartment building that we could rent so that the commanders could move the guys in out of tents. Or we would be looking for open fields so that they could have a place to park trucks, etc. By this time we knew enough about Middle Easterners generally and knew enough about Lebanese in particular and enough about Lebanese businessmen that we knew where most of the soft spots were. So we were able to insist upon deals on behalf of the military where Uncle Sam got, if not his full money's worth, at least 90 percent of his money's worth. I will never forget at the end of this episode, sometime in the middle of October -- we spent from the end of July to the middle of October as the real estate procurers for the Embassy and the troop -- we were visited by one of the Lebanese landlords with whom we had been dealing off and on during the course of the summer. I don't remember now what prompted his arrival, whether we sent out notices that they should come in and get their last rental payment or whatever, but in any event he came in. We did the immediate business at hand and then we sat back and generally chit chatted. Finally I realized that this guy

had something else he wanted to say. At last, he looked at the two of us and said, "This has been a very instructive experience dealing with the two of you for the last six months. I just want you to know that I would rather deal with one of my fellow Lebanese property owners any day than deal with either one of the two of you."

Q: A great compliment.

HANDYSIDE: We saved the United States government an enormous amount of money simply by insisting that the military not pay five or six times what the property was worth or whatever. In one instance we had negotiations going on with one of the very large property owners in the area and he just figured that we were so desperate (this was to get an apartment building so that we could move the guys in off the beach), believing that Americans were such creature comfort specialists, that he could just keep demanding four or five times what the apartment building was worth and eventually we would cave in and pay it. We gave him a couple of final deadlines and said, "You got to come down to the ballpark that we are prepared to pay or we are just going to break off negotiations." The final deadline passed and he was continuing to ask an outlandish price for his property. So we informed the Embassy and the Embassy informed the Marine Corps that they would have to figure out some other say to solve the problem because we weren't going to permit the US government to spend that kind of money for this highway robbery. So the Marine Corps dutifully went about their business and started to build a tent city. The fascinating thing was that the building they wanted was an eight or nine story building up on the top of the cliff and it looked down over this slope of sand that led down to the seashore. Within about eight hours after the construction of the tent city had begun down on the lower level, this guy was back in our backyard saying, "Oh, but what are you doing?" Well, we said, "We would rather have these guys in places where they can have a proper shower, etc. but we are not going to pay through the nose for it and school is over." "Well, my price is down." "It is too late." His building sat there for the rest of the time empty. So instead of getting ten times what it was worth from the Americans he got zero.

Q: Just prior to the landing what was the conventional wisdom within the Embassy what this landing would do? The reason I ask this is there had been rumors of a landing and I had been told about the landing when I was in Dhahran about a day before and the feeling there was that we didn't know but there might be a general uprising of Arabs against the Americans or something like that. There was real concern that this might kick over the beehive. This was a considerable distance from Beirut. What was the general feeling there?

HANDYSIDE: I am embarrassed to tell you Stu that I can't remember. My guess is that there was probably a bifurcation of opinion within the Embassy. There were probably those who said yes this is a good idea and others who said no this is going to bring the roof down. Both sides, obviously, over a period of time were demonstrated to be wrong in their predictions. But I think in part the reason that it didn't cause an enormous upset was because of the way the United States government handled it. We made it very clear that we were there to stabilize. We made it very clear that we were going to continue to go along with the Lebanese government. We didn't start promptly across the mountains headed for Iraq to overthrow the Qasim coup government in Baghdad (which was one of the things that at least the journalists had predicted the United States was going to do). And also, by an enormous amount of talking and a certain amount of application of US pressure, some of the senior officials in the Republic of Lebanon didn't do some of the dumb things that they were

planning to do. The President of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun, who was a very outspoken guy and was by this time really at cross purposes with all his co-religionists who were members of the Lebanese government an enormous amount of work went into grabbing his coattails and pulling him back to make sure that he didn't do things or say things that were really going to cause the pot to boil over. So it didn't "just happen." There was an enormous amount of work that went into it.

Q: The Marines left in October 1958. What were you doing then?

HANDYSIDE: We had been off until early May until the end of October, and finally after we wrapped up the business of making sure that all the rest of this stuff was taken care of...one of the things that I can recall that we had to do was to go around and make the final settlements on the various properties the U.S. military had used and either restore them to condition precedent or agree upon final damages. This process was exacerbated by the fact that while the airborne troops had cleaned up their area -- it was Spic-and-span by the time they were ready to move out. They had been camped in an enormous olive grove south of the city. Apart from some olive trees which had either been cut down because they were going to build some kind of facility right where the tree was or in a couple of instances there were some trees that had been hit by big vehicles and were severely damaged. But apart from a few olive trees that we had to pay for, there were no sort of closing costs that I could recall.

In sharp contrast, the area that the Marines had ultimately occupied north of the city was left in a fashion that can only be described as disreputable. The garbage hadn't been cleaned up, the trash had been spread all over the landscape, etc. Our responsibility, therefore, was to assemble some people to clean up the mess. I came to the conclusion that the airborne troops as a matter of course cleaned up their area because they had to live in it. But the Marines were much of the time on board ship. Anything they didn't want they threw over the side, and never had to worry about cleaning it up. Whether that is the explanation or not I don't know. But there certainly were those kinds of differences. And for the real estate twins it meant there were a lot of loose ends that had to be tied up. The process went on for some three or four weeks after the last of the troops had actually departed.

Then we simply went back to school. We sort of picked up where we left off eight months before.

ROBERT L. FUNSETH
Political Officer
Beirut, Lebanon (1957-1959)

Robert Funseth was born in Minnesota and raised in New York State. He was educated at Hobart College, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and Cornell University. After service in the US Navy, he joined the Foreign Service and was sent initially to Iran, being posted in Teheran and Tabriz. He subsequently served as Political Officer in Lebanon at the time of the US Marine Corps landings in Beirut after which he served in the Department dealing with United Nations Affairs. He also served as Consular Officer in Bordeaux. Mr. Funseth was

interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: Did you go abroad right away?

FUNSETH: Well, I was at FSI [the Foreign Service Institute] and was put in French language training. During this period, through mutual friends, I met my wife who was one of Loy Henderson's secretaries in the Department. He was then the deputy undersecretary for Management. We were married, and my first post was as junior political officer in Beirut, Lebanon.

Q: You arrived in Beirut in '57. Things picked up shortly thereafter. What was the situation?
FUNSETH: Well, I was there from 1957 through '59. This was in the aftermath of the Suez War. The promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, with its acceptance by Lebanon. Embraced by Lebanon, which was the only country that did. The President of Lebanon was Camille Chamoun. The Foreign Minister was Charles Malik, who had been President of the United Nations General Assembly, and was a renowned statesman.

Lebanon was then living up to its reputation as the Switzerland of the Middle East. But there were ominous signs because even as I arrived, there was an election campaign going on and Nasser was very strong in Cairo and was making an appeal to Arabs, including in Lebanon and in Syria. The whole history of Lebanon and Syria and how it had been carved out in the French mandate was still an issue. Then Chamoun was making indications that he would serve a second term and have the constitution amended as an independent republic. It had only become independent at the end of World War II. One of the provisions in the constitution was a one-term President. This issue divided the Lebanese. There were people that were certainly not pro-Nasser who did not favor Chamoun succeeding himself. Nasser was reportedly supporting people who were opposed to Chamoun. There were people in Lebanon who, I suppose, some internationalist wanted to go so far as to become even much closer to Nasser. During this period, you had the United Arab Republic created in which Syria became part of Cairo. And some of which you're seeing played out in the Syrian relationship with Lebanon now. It was certainly apparent at that time.

Q: I find that the role of a political officer is often misunderstood. As Junior Political Officer in Lebanon, which obviously was at an interesting political time. How did you go about your work? I mean, who told you what to do and how did you go about doing it?

FUNSETH: Well, basically it's what my mentors at the School of Advanced International Studies said it was. The Ambassador is reporting on political developments at his level and the Deputy Chief of Mission--we had a two-person political section, sometimes it was three, augmented with an officer--you report on the political developments in Lebanon as they related to our own interests. Very similar to my training as a newspaperman. You were a reporter, and that basically was the way I operated. Established a broad range of contacts in all of the political factions, both pro-Chamoun and anti-Chamoun, to find out really what was going on. Here's a political officer's dream post because the Lebanese are so accessible and like to talk. So basically I reported on those issues of personalities that we were interested in.

Q: At that time, was there much of a . . . (I'm not sure how to describe it.) the Shiite, the poor

Arabs. Did they have much or were they kind of off to one side?

FUNSETH: Well, the Shiites as a political force have come in recent times, it wasn't that apparent. But it was a communal society in which I remember the leader, There was one who was pro-Chamoun who was the speaker of the Parliament. Then one who was probably anti-Chamoun, General Chehab came in became speaker of the Parliament. So we had contacts in the Shiites. The Sunni community was divided, reflecting a history of the Sunni community in Beirut which dated back to the Ottoman times. Then the Sunnis in the north that had really been brought more close to Syria. The Colomi family was very active in that.

Then you had the Maronites who were the dominant Christian community. The largest Christian minority were the Greek Orthodox. You had the political parties sort of reflecting these religious groupings. Then there was an interesting new party just starting. Its leader in Lebanon was Jumblatt, who was also in the feudal tradition, leader of the Druze. Here you had this Druze feudal leader who was ideologically trying to be a social democrat and attracted a lot of young people - Greek Orthodox - it was trying to be a secular party but very Arab nationalist. The movement was just then starting, and wasn't that strong in neighboring countries, but it was beginning. Nasser was a member. It was cutting across the political spectrum. So you had people identified primarily with their religious confessional group and then by village. But then you had this other crossing.

Beirut was also interesting because of the American University of Beirut with its American connections. You had the French tradition, especially among the Maronites. The French University, St. Joseph, had a monopoly on training the lawyers. If you wanted to go into a political life, you primarily were a lawyer. You had a free press there. A very active intellectual community. On the surface, it was a very young country. It had been enlarged when it became independent. It demonstrated, even the following year during the first Lebanese civil war and then subsequently, how fragile this union was.

Q: Among the officers what was the view towards Nasser at the time?
FUNSETH: Well, after all, it was the Eisenhower Administration. Eisenhower had just been reelected and had opposed the Anglo-French-Israeli war. I think we were still trying to reach an accommodation of some kind with Nasser. But here in Lebanon was a government that was committed to democracy, to western values and ideals and wanted and asked for our support. Then Nasser supported to elements that we thought were inimical to our interests emerged. That influenced our attitudes at least towards the Nasser elements in Lebanon.

Q: Donald Heath was your ambassador?

FUNSETH: Donald Heath was the ambassador when I arrived there. Before the war began in '58, Robert McClintock arrived as ambassador.

Q: What was Donald Heath like as ambassador?

FUNSETH: Well, I never got to know him very well. He'd come from Vietnam. For me, as still a junior officer, he was certainly a very pleasant man to be around. He always wore a white suit, I remember. I think he, perhaps from his Vietnam experience, and this is just an hypothesis on my

part, I'm not sure it's correct, but I think he'd sort of been involved with the U.S. support of Diem in Saigon and he found a strong man and courageous leader like Chamoun and you supported him. But he wasn't there even a year before McClintock arrived. Then you had this contested election in which Chamoun had a narrow minority. But the issue of the expiration of his term was coming in 1958. And there was an incident--an assassination--and you had the Muslims starting to close off their border, and then you had the murder of the Iraqi king.

Q: July 14, 1958.

FUNSETH: Yes. I remember that very well because there was a curfew and I had a political assistant, a Lebanese, who worked for me who used to just monitor the radio at home. He picked up this report from Baghdad that the king had been murdered. He called me on the phone and told me what had happened. I really had to debate, because there was a curfew, but anyway I got in my car and didn't get stopped by any Lebanese police and made it to the embassy. I woke up Ambassador McClintock, and we sent a "Flash" [top priority telegram] into the Department that we had picked up this report.
Q: Let's talk about how this played out, because that really started things off out there.

FUNSETH: I think that leading up to this there was a division in reporting. There were elements, especially in the intelligence community, that were reporting from their sources that Nasser was supporting elements in Lebanon that were opposed to our interests. Nasser was supported by the Soviet Union, so there was a big power play. In the Political section, I was reporting that the issue was Chamoun's desire to seek reelection, which was the real issue, and that there were people - Lebanese nationalists, I can think of several prominent people - who were opposed to his seeking reelection because they believed it would be too disruptive to the compact that held them all together. After the coup, there was a great period of uncertainty in the Middle East. No one knew what was going to happen. The Muslim quarter of Beirut, called the Basta, erupted that night and Chamoun invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine and asked for help. The President agreed.

I'll always remember that before that time I lived in an area in the center of town. Being a junior officer, I couldn't afford to live up in the high rent district around the Chancery, luckily because we lived in an old quarter of Beirut near where the President lived. Not until after we moved in it was the old Jewish Quarter that dated back to the 17th Century when the Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain. We lived in that Quarter, and I remember the first thing that happened was that I evacuated my wife from that apartment and brought her to a hotel near the Embassy.

A lot of the dependents left. The fleet was off-shore and it was to land at noon the next day. I remember that morning I was called up. We all met early in the morning and the ambassador announced that the U.S. Marines from the Sixth Fleet were going to land at noon, and that his wife, the DCM's wife, and the wife of the CIA Station Chief had left on the 6:00 flight that morning. They never invoked mandatory evacuation but it was alert one, two, three. I guess it was two, but strongly urged. I remember a lot of dependents left on a cruise ship that was in port.

I had just been married. My wife and I didn't want to be separated. I went to the Ambassador and said, "It isn't a mandatory evacuation." And he said, "That's right." So Marilyn stayed. She was one of three wives who stayed behind.

Anyway, it was a very tense period. The Marines came in and did land. They secured the airport. There was a debate about Jordan and it was finally decided the British would go into Jordan, which they did. After the Marines secured the airport, the next day they were going to move in from the airport which is south of the city, up the road along the Mediterranean and into the city to the port and secure that road so the ships could come in. It was probably one of the most exciting, intense days of my life. Remember, Radio Moscow was putting out that this was going to be World War III. We were in the eye of the storm, there were headlines around the world. Khrushchev was-

Q: I was in Rostenur, Saudi Arabia, at the time. We kept looking out the window. We knew about the landing. We couldn't tell anybody. Everybody was waiting for the mob to arise.

FUNSETH: There have been documents released that I've recently seen that the King of Saudi Arabia's pleas to Eisenhower strongly influenced the decision. He was urging him to do this.

Anyway, it became a very tense period because General Chehab, the Commander of the Lebanese Army, had remained aloof from all of this. The patriarch was not pro-Chamoun. No one knew which way the Army was going to go. Going back, one of the problems was communication. The Embassy was unable to communicate with the Sixth Fleet that we could see. We had to go through Washington to get to the Sixth Fleet, to the landing Commander. All the ambassadors were coming in to see the American ambassador before they sent telegrams back. I was sort of at the residence with McClintock ushering people in. I'll always remember the French ambassador, who had an apartment overlooking the beach, and remembering the French, as I recall, were three days late going into Port Said. He was talking to me before he went in to see McClintock. He said, "I was standing on my balcony watching and when the first raft touched on the beach, my second hand hit twelve o'clock."

Apparently, that was a real effort for him because those Marines had been aboard those ships for a long, long time and they were headed back to Greece, and they had to turn around and they weren't all that sure they weren't landing in a hostile environment until they saw young boys selling 7-Up and Coca Cola.

That was the morning when I evacuated my wife and I remember McClintock swearing everyone to secrecy in the room. You can't tell your spouse or anybody what's going to happen. Of course, the Sixth Fleet had already been in with mine sweepers and everything. I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, obviously we'll keep the confidence, but I want you to know that they're selling boat rides from the St. George Hotel out to the landing area. 'Come see the American Marines in action.' The curious are going out to see it."

Anyway, it was a very tense day when they landed. There were no hostile fire. We did lose a pilot, I remember. His plane burned out and crashed in the hills over Beirut. It was a very tense period because we didn't know what was going to happen next. The Commander of the Marine Force was a brigadier general named Wade. I'd been at the Embassy all night. Very early in the morning the ambassador's secretary called me. We had then since moved from the old Chancery on rue Clemency down to this converted apartment house right on the beach which was where we were located when it was blown up. My office, being the junior political officer, was in the kitchen of

that apartment. The ambassador had sort of a penthouse apartment overlooking the bay. Came in the room and there was this brigadier general standing there on one foot. Very nervous. I don't know who else was in the room. McClintock says, "Bob, this is General Wade." I noticed he had empty holsters. I learned when he arrived at the chancery, a corporal disarmed him. Wouldn't let him come up with it.

Anyway, McClintock said, "The Marines are going to move in from the airport today. I can't reach General Chehab. We have reports that the Lebanese Army is deployed against the Marines." He was very excited. He said something like, "Bob, you get the hell out there and prevent a war until I find Chehab!" I had Blanche call down to the motor pool and get a car and then, because I didn't speak Arabic (I spoke French) and most of the people in the Lebanese Army spoke French, (there was an Arabic language school in Beirut at the time), I called down to one of the language officers who just died this past week, Slater Black. (I think he participated in this.)

Q: Yes, I have his interview.

FUNSETH: Anyway, I called down. Slater was in a special operation. I said, "Slater, meet me in the lobby." We didn't have cue cards in the motor pool. Wouldn't you know, the car that came up was the old Plymouth that had a weak battery and no springs. In this car we get with the general in the back. Slater and I are sitting in the front seat and off we go on the way to the airport.

Well, I had remembered my own reconnoitering that there was a UN compound on the way out to the airport and that I had seen the armor of the Lebanese army, which I think was three or four light tanks on semis, had been parked there the day before. So I said, "Let's swing by there." Sure enough, the tanks weren't on the flatbeds. So we continued down the road and there was a circle there with the road that goes to the beach and there's a tank. There's a back road from the airport which the general didn't know about. We didn't know whether his unit was coming up the main road from the airport or taking this back road. So we stopped there and I remember Slater and I crawled up on the guy and asked whether we could come up. This Lebanese sergeant spoke English and I introduced myself. I said, "You know, the American marines landed yesterday." He said, "Yes." We talked a little bit. I tried to get some contact point. My recollection is that he had an aunt in Toledo. I said, "You know, the marines were invited in by your government. They're just going to be driving down the road here to secure the fort. What are your orders when this column comes down the road?" He said, "I'll ask my second lieutenant who's up above here listening in on our conversation." By that time, the general was really getting nervous. He's sticking his head out the window. So I said, "Well, look, when this marine column comes down the road, remember your aunt in Toledo!" So we continued down the airport road and there's four Lebanese tank guns zeroing in. You go around a circle and you head towards the airport--a double highway.

Off to the left, there was a sort of an athletic camp for the Lebanese army and in the trees there I saw a Lebanese infantry company digging trenches. Meanwhile, the American reporters of the International Press were following me all over town. When they saw me leave the Embassy, they jumped into a taxi and followed us out. So as we come up over the rise on this divided highway, there comes the rumbling marine amphibious group. So it bounced over and stopped. General Wade gets out. There was a Colonel. His name begins with an H. All black-faced. I think a military

attache was there. We started to talk.

Then I realized a couple of things. One, this marine amphibious group didn't have all that much ammunition. Indeed, four Lebanese tanks were a problem for them. A Lebanese infantry company was also a problem. It wasn't a sure thing. Moreover, they didn't want to open fire anyway. But it was a very, very tense situation. And then the Lebanese air force started flying above us. At that point--it's a long time ago--Slater went off someplace and the attaché left. I was sort of there alone. I remember telling General Wade that these reporters could hear what we were saying. So they called up a squad of marine riflemen; young kids with guns. I remember they pushed the press back and they said, "Make like birds and fly away!"

So they made this circle. Oh, before I left the ambassador's office, when I went out the door, he said, "One thing. If you get that column moving before I get back out there, remember that we want . . . a tank and some men up to the residence to guard that compound." We weren't guarding the chancery, but we were guarding his residence. I was wondering what that was about.

So then--and this may be a little off--but the incidents are right. The sequence. At this point a Lebanese officer arrives on the scene from General Chehab. So we talked back and forth. I think even Admiral Holloway comes out at this point. Anyway, he finally said he could agree and we plotted the road by which the column would go. It would hug the coastline, even though there were some difficult places for tanks to get through all along the Cornish into the city. Not go through the center of the city. We finally worked that out, and that was agreeable.

Then I had this dilemma. Should I tell him that we're going to peel off some vehicles to go to the residence or should I not say anything? I decided I'd better. Good lesson in the principle of diplomacy because I didn't know--supposing we'd peeled them off and we didn't have an understanding. We had reports that the Lebanese army were coming out between us and I didn't know where they were. So I was really agonizing over it. I finally said, "Major, oh by the way, when the column goes to the left towards the St. George Hotel, we're going to peel off a couple of vehicles and there are going to be a few marines who are going to be at our old compound on rue Clemency to guard the residence." He said, "That's not within my authority. My authority was..." And he was a good military officer. He was told to agree to a certain route. He said, "We're going to have to check that out." We started moving anyway with that issue unresolved. The Military Attaché - Colonel Haad was his name - said, "We're going to get moving." I don't even know if the general was there. "Who the hell knows this route? This isn't the route we're supposed to take. Can you lead us in?" I said, "Yes." All these marines are in flack suits. And I'm in a seersucker suit. I thought, "Well, I'm going to crawl into the lead armored vehicle."

All of a sudden, the jeep comes up. Here's a 17, 18 year-old kid driving the jeep in a flack suit, a marine photographer sitting in the back seat and me in a seersucker suit. And Colonel Haad and they all get back into their armored vehicles and close the hatches down.

At that point, Stu, I thought to myself, "Funseth, you're supposed to be a smart fellow. What in the world are you doing, sitting in the lead vehicle, coming over the hill, facing a Lebanese Arab infantry company?" At that point, what had been sort of not a serious war, became a very serious war to me. And off we go. At that point, Ambassador McClintock arrives with Holloway and more

exchange and we then stop at this physical education camp where these troops are. And there in what had been the little room of--a pretty big room--whoever ran that little training facility, was General Chehab at the desk, chain smoking cigarettes and I even think maybe the guy's bed was in there. Here we are: Admiral Holloway,

Q: Commander of the Sixth Fleet.

FUNSETH: I think the Sixth Fleet Commander. No, he was that Admiral in London who had been made Supreme Allied Commander, or something, over the Navy, and everybody. General Wade and there may have been another admiral, McClintock and me and Chehab. He's on the phone and obviously there was a very tense situation. The additional Lebanese troops had come in in that beach area between us and the airport.

Chehab wasn't quite sure what was going to happen. He was trying to work out some peaceful entry. The marine general was getting increasingly concerned that it was going to become more and more difficult. So at one point, he just whispered in my ear, "Tell the Ambassador that I want to move." So I told the ambassador. I'm not absolutely sure of this, but McClintock and I were whispering and either I came up with the idea or he did, or we both did, "Why don't you invite Chehab to ride with you and then the Lebanese soldiers will see their commander is leading." So he put it to Chehab. Chehab was really perspiring and he agreed. So they get into the ambassador's old Cadillac with flags flying. They're the lead car. Then behind them, I guess, was the marine general in that beat-up old Plymouth with no shock absorbers, and then me in the jeep, and then the armored column behind us.

As we get up by the beach area, it all stops. I ran up and McClintock said, expletive deleted, "There's a problem in the back now and the General and I are going to have to go back and make sure the Lebanese troops are obeying his order. Lead 'em in and I'll catch up with you." Then I remember asking him, "What about the group that's supposed to go to the Embassy?" The General said, "You take the first three units and lead them to the chancery and the driver will take me with the rest of them ." So we split. I remember leading the marines down the main street outside AUB [the American University of Beirut]. Everyone's applauding. We pull up in front of the old chancery. Well, there was a person who lived in--and you may have known him--Colonel William Eddy.

Q: Oh, yes.

FUNSETH: Vice President of Tapline.

Q: A very famous Arabist.

FUNSETH: President of my alma mater, Hobart College. He mounted the whole intelligence operation in North Africa. Born in Beirut. His father had been a missionary. He lived in an apartment house overlooking the old chancery on Rue Clemency. If you remember, that was a high-rise. He and David Dodge sent a letter to President Eisenhower opposing the landing of the troops or U.S. intervention if it was there to support violating the constitution of General Chehab in office. But he's a Marine from World War I. He was the first U.S. Minister to the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia.

Q: He translated for Roosevelt.

FUNSETH: At Bitter Lake Conference, yes. But his commission as U.S. Minister--to show you what kind of Marine he was--although he's a professor of English, President Roosevelt said, "Colonel William Eddy, U.S. Marine Corps retired." Anyway, as we pulled in, what had happened as we had arbitrarily taken these three vehicles was I'd split up a Marine Company. When we finally stopped in front of that chancery, I was confronted with a very angry young Marine Office, either a Lieutenant or a Captain, who had lost half of his company. He was furious! Really steaming! I looked up and there was Colonel Eddy and Mary looking down at us.

So I told him what it was. By then, I began to wonder about this action and wondered if it might not have something to do with President Chamoun's house that was another half mile down the street. Anyway, I told this young Lieutenant, "In your Marine Corps orientation, did you ever hear of Colonel William Eddy, U.S. Marine Corps? He's a much-decorated Marine Officer from World War I." I briefly outlined his career. And I said, "He's a real loyal Marine. You know what would really gladden his heart? Why don't you ask your platoon to salute him?" That was a great idea! So they lined up all the Marines to present arms and saluted William Eddy. Eddy was so delighted he almost fell off the balcony!

How much more time do we have?

Q: Why don't we finish up Lebanon?

FUNSETH: It became more interesting. Eisenhower was President, had gotten enough that there was some division in the embassy between the intelligence community and the political reporting from the Embassy. [It also was evident] that there was some disagreement in the embassy about supporting Chamoun. It was our contention, as I've said earlier, that the real issue in Lebanon was Chamoun seeking reelection.

Q: This was the intelligence community seeing this as a Nasser, come Soviet-right thinking.

FUNSETH: Yes, and of course there was Nasser money coming in there. It wasn't benign. I mean, the prime minister was. . . they attempted to assassinate him. He was evacuated out. He may have lived the rest of his life in exile in Turkey. It was very tense.

There was a lot of bloodshed! There was common knowledge that Nasser was putting money and arms in there. It was coming across the border. There had been UN security. A UN Observers' group had been put in there before the landing and they had established posts. It was a constructive lesson on depending on the UN because during the daylight they were watching everything, but then the stuff had come in at night. Arms were coming in there. It was a very tense situation!

I've always felt that President Eisenhower made the right decision for the wrong reason. His instincts on it were correct, but not for the reason presented. Although you didn't know what was going to happen after that letter. Anyway, so he sends Murphy out.

Q: Robert Murphy?

FUNSETH: Robert Murphy comes out. I'll always remember it because I was used to this sort of cryptic messages that I had sent. Murphy came out and McClintock went out to meet him. We all knew that there was this split. He made the first jet flight to the Middle East. The Air Force flew him out in a tanker or something, a jet, and he flew non-stop from Dover to Beirut Airport. I remember we couldn't get him out of the air because they didn't have anything to do it.

I'll relate the following incident chronologically, but I didn't learn about it until I was back in Washington the following year. Colonel Eddy told me.

Murphy was in North Africa, and Murphy and Eddy became friends during the North African campaign, so they knew one another. Eddy told me that Murphy came to see him and said, "Bill, I understand you're opposed to our landing." Eddy never told me while I was there. It will show you how discreet and correct he is. He said, "Bob, these troops are in here to jam Chamoun down the throat of the Lebanese people. You're damn right I'm opposed to it. But if we're coming in here to uphold the Lebanese constitution and the Republic of Lebanon, then I'd support it." Then he said, "Bob, just follow your instincts as a good Political Officer and get all the facts before you make up your mind. Talk to the opposition. Find out."

So, that then explains what then happened the next morning. Now, Murphy is meeting with the country team. I don't want this to sound self-serving. I'm going to make this as accurate as I can, but this is what happened. Apparently, I learned, Murphy is sitting there and he's in a white suit. He may have already spoken to Chamoun. At this point, as visitor, he wanted to talk to the opposition. So he asked who in the country team. We had the ambassador, the DCM, the station chief, the chief of the political section there. Did they personally know the opposition? They didn't. Murphy said, "Well, who in the Embassy <u>does</u> know the opposition?" McClintock said, "Well, I have a Junior Political Officer who has maintained contact with the opposition." So he said, "Send him up."

I get this call, again from Blanche, the same secretary who told me to come up a couple of days earlier. She said, "Get up here right away!" So I ran up and came into this office and there is Murphy. I'm not awestruck, but I can tell you I'm not relaxed! Here's the great Robert Murphy! He knows. He said, "You know, I've reached a point in my visit where I thought it might be interesting to talk to the opposition. I understand you know some of the opposition." He already had decided this. He said, "Who would you suggest I talk to first?" I said, "Well, there are three Sunnis: Abdul Leafi, Saab Salaam, and Rashid Karami are three people that you need to talk to." He said, "Can you arrange to have those appointments set up?" I said, "Yes, I think I can." And I did.

Apparently, the next day he asked for another opposition leader and no one in the country team knew. It became an uncomfortable joke, and he said, "Well, I suppose Bob knows that person." So, my brief moment of glory. Each day I would go up and set up another appointment for him with Kamal Jumblatt, Rashid Karami, Abdul Leafi, Sami So.

Then Murphy went to Cairo. My recollection is that when he went to see Nasser, Nasser kept him cooling his heels for several hours. But Murphy refused to take umbrage at that. He just stuck it out.

[Back in Beirut] he came around to what had been the political section, which was largely me. My position was that we should support the Lebanese constitution and Chamoun. There are other people who have written memoirs about this incident of how we had flip- flopped on our policy.

The Parliament then met later in the summer and Bud Ramzar, who had then come out as Chief of the Political Section, and I went to witness this election of Chehab. The whole city was cordoned off. We had to walk the last half a mile. My wife, of course, knows where I am. When the ballot reached where he had been named president, the Army started shooting. It sounded like the whole civil war had started over again. I remember coming back to the chancery. The new government came in and all of my contacts: Karami was prime minister, Raymond Eddy was in, Kamal Jumblatt, Philippe Takla as foreign minister. All of these people came in.

Ambassador McClintock--I don't know if he ever knew them, knew them by reputation--he was relatively short, very dapper, had a grey moustache, and very self-confident. Anyway, I came into his office and he said, "Well, Bob, you're such an expert with the opposition. Let's exchange contact lists." So a lot of the people that I had developed contacts with, then became the ambassador's, the DCM's. Then I had the opposition!

But out of all this there was one [overall] experience. You know, the Arabs as a people remember, if not friends, people who've been loyal to them. When I left Lebanon (it never happened to me again in my Foreign Service career) these opposition people that I didn't have [social] contact with had a dinner in my honor, [given by the foreign minister]. And other ministers.

When I came back to Washington, I was assigned to UN Political Affairs. That fall, Rashid Karami, as prime minister came to and addressed the General Assembly. Eisenhower invited him down [to Washington] to meet with him here. That's when the planes landed right at National Airport. They came down commercially. I went around to the Lebanese Desk and didn't expect to be included. Karami was coming to the Department, and I would at least like to be in the Lobby and say hello to him. I was made to understand, "Look, you're not involved in this anymore." So, I didn't press it.

That night - we were living in an apartment in Fairlington - I get a phone call from the Lebanese Desk Officer. His superiors had ruled that I shouldn't be included. He said, "Are you free for lunch tomorrow?" I said, "Why?" He said, "You won't believe it! The plane lands. The Chief of Protocol is standing there. Some Assistant Secretary is there. Rashid Karami gets off the plane and starts looking. Comes down to the bottom of the ramp. Shakes hands with the Chief of Protocol. 'Where's Bob Funseth?' I can't believe he isn't here to welcome me to Washington!" Oh, boy! So I was included. Karami personally included me in every event that he was involved in. I think he was letting people know that there was someone at least in that Embassy who listened to him and he had confidence in reporting their position, and he wanted us to know he appreciated that.

Q: One of the things I've found interesting in these interviews is often how--it's not repeated in

such dramatic terms, but--an embassy tends to get so absorbed with the government they end up by throwing the opposition to a junior officer, or maybe if it's a labor type government, maybe the Labor Attaché. Then a new government comes in and the embassy power structure is sort of helpless because they haven't done this.

FUNSETH: First of all, it was so tense between Chamoun and the opposition. And believe me, not all of the opposition were favorable to our interests. It was very emotional, and I think that probably McClintock hadn't been there that long to develop contact, but I think they were respectful. The fact that McClintock tolerated my extensive contacts with the opposition. My telegrams were reported--whatever I wrote went in. I guess the Embassy was covered. I take your point, and it's something you have to be careful about, but we did have contact at least with one political officer.

Q: I note in looking in the Biographic Register that you got a commendation for your work in getting the Marines in. What did you get?

FUNSETH: Well, first of all, I was part of a small group of officers who the NC (?) got a Distinguished Honor Award for that whole operation. Then from General Paul Adams, Commander of the 82nd Airborne: I was one of several Foreign Service officers who were given citations by him personally when he left. That was in recognition for, as they said at the time, my courage and diplomatic skill in getting them into Beirut without a shot being fired, and then my subsequent role as Political Adviser.

Q: Did you work as a political adviser, sort of an intermediator between the military and...

FUNSETH: Well, General Adams I don't think was four stars, but he certainly was three stars. I never briefed him personally, but his G-2 [intelligence officer], who was a full colonel, saw me every morning and I briefed him fully. That briefing was provided General Adams. There wasn't one incident between our troops and the Lebanese. [Our military] had absolute rigid control.

The 82nd Airborne was camped where Marc Anthony's Roman Legions had camped near the airport in an olive grove. The owner of that grove filed for an indemnity just as his ancestors had done against the Roman soldiers for cutting down a tree or something. I remember when they had their first liberty in Beirut that Adams personally rode--sort of a Patten-like figure--with pearl pistols. He rode around in an armed jeep with a machine gun. Any guy who behaved in the slightest way that wasn't correct was shipped out. I remember we had the UN observers, Odbol General, there was Gala Plaza from Equador, and there was a man from Pakistan.

Q: Odbol was from Norway, wasn't he?

FUNSETH: He was Norwegian. They were the UN Observer group. Well, when our troops first arrived and then the 82nd Airborne Division came in, we decided we'd have a reception at the Ambassador's house to introduce UNIGIL to Adams and his staff. The city was sort of cordoned off, so you didn't want the general getting lost. I remember I was in front of the embassy and the general had had this new sedan flown in. Randy Higgs was the DCM and the General was there in the front. Randy said, "Bob, you'd better get in the car and make sure he gets [seated correctly]."

So I jump in the car and [the general] sort of freezes. I quickly introduce myself.

I don't know if you've ever been in that old Lebanese house which was a residence. There was a little patio and there's the three UN people and some other people and in strides this general - a paratrooper with his boots and his two guns. He comes walking in and Ambassador McClintock calls me and says, "Bob, you think you can disarm the General?" So I walked over to the general: "General, you think you'd be more comfortable if you checked your sidearms with me?" He sort of hesitated for a moment and then he took off his two six-guns and handed them to me. I put them in the ambassador's bedroom.

I think, as we discussed in the last meeting, President Eisenhower made the right decision probably for the wrong reasons. The effect of that landing, which was very successful and a credit to the United States, resulted in a period of truce, at least in the history of Lebanon. It also gave the Lebanese time to regather and reunify themselves as a nation. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. There are a couple of factors. One, I think, looking back at it -- and I never served in Lebanon again but I maintain an interest in it -- is that when King Hussein of Jordan expelled the Palestinians, the PLO {Palestine Liberation Army], a lot of them came into Lebanon. I think that was more than that fragile political structure could digest. That led to other developments.

A lot of other outside players--Israel became very much involved in the internal political situation in Lebanon. For its own reasons, Israel got involved with the Phalange Christians. A guy I knew very well, Pierre Jamaille, and his sons, his successors. So, I think at the time, it was the correct move. I think also, in retrospect, that it was realized we're not in a position to do that anymore. We had massive resources. We were a world power and we were prepared to exercise that power.

I think the other thing is that the military operation--you can't fine tune it. There are too many different people involved. No matter what we were recording, by the time it filtered down to the G-2 of the landing party, I don't think they had a clear idea of all the facts on what to expect. Certainly, when a larger force came in, from my own experience in briefing General Paul Adams, he had a very imperfect sense of what was the reality. But they quickly adjusted to it, and I thought acted very responsively, and [consequently], I think, made a powerful impression on the Lebanese. The troops were well disciplined, attractive young Americans. They fanned out in the perimeter around Beirut, including the overlooking mountains.

I remember after things had settled down, my wife and I drove up the mountains to have lunch. It was quite a sight driving up the road and the Sixth Fleet anchored down there below. We went into this hotel and there were Lebanese families with their daughters and they were chaperoning a little social event that Sunday afternoon, with GI's and Marines who weren't on duty, dancing, and having a good time. First of all, the troops were very well behaved, very well disciplined. They made a powerful impression on the Lebanese.

[The landing] permitted the [Lebanese] to regroup and exercise their constitution. The elected General Chehab. I think that that period then probably was reasonably tranquil. Unfortunately, they just couldn't escape their own history. Many of the people that I knew rather well at that time, Camille Chamoun, and others--Kamal Jumblatt--those political leaders hung on in protecting their own clans and their own groups, and they never came together again. Then, in recent years, you

had Syria reintroduce itself. Syria was a factor even then because through the United Arab Republics and the Syrian infiltration, the whole [Syrian influence and] effect in Northern Lebanon.

I was thinking about it. It is a very interesting thing for me because I went from Beirut to the UN up there where this was being played out in the UN Security Council. Lebanon, a very small country, had a very unusual Foreign Minister, world class, in Charles Malik. He represented Lebanon before the Security Council. Dag Hammarskjold was then Secretary General. The UN sent out this observer group, UNIGIL. They followed conventional UN military procedures. They'd establish places. But everyone knew the infiltration was still taking place at night on back roads. But that wasn't reporting. So the impression you get from reading the UNIGIL reports, and what was being reported in the United Nations, in fact what was happening on the ground, there was a disconnect in reality. It pointed out to me--I learned a lesson at that time--you have to be very careful in how much you can depend on a UN operation. First of all, you don't have that much control over it; secondly, it's imperfect. You may hope it's going to expose, as Lebanon did, infiltration, but it didn't. So it's very much a political instrument.

WALTER J. SILVA
American Citizen's Affairs Officer
Beirut (1957-1960)

Walter J. Silva was born in Massachusetts in 1925. After serving in the United States Army from 1943-1945 he received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1949. His career has included positions in Dakar, Panama City, Maracaibo, Beirut, Thessaloniki, Athens, Rome, and Naples. Mr. Silva was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

SILVA: That's where I was going as a staff vice consul. So I enjoyed my home leave, getting ready to leave for Naples, and I got another telegram, the assignment is broken, you're going to Beirut. I went to Washington, much to their dismay--they wanted me to go directly to Beirut. I went to Washington and found out that the reason they had changed my assignment was that my name had moved up quickly on the register and I was about to get an appointment. So they couldn't send me to the job in Naples, because that was a staff job. The distinction at the time, even after Wriston, was very strong. Luckily my household effects had been left in Maracaibo and not been shipped, otherwise my belongings would have gone to Naples and ended up in the flea market. But as it was, the post had screwed up and hadn't shipped them. So our effects and we went to Beirut. I went there as the American Citizen's Affairs officer, and after I was there for two months I got appointed an FSO-8. I was then an FSS-9, which was the equivalent of an FSO-6. But at the time you got no credit for education, no credit for experience, and certainly no credit for knowing what was going on in the Service. The post was in the middle of an inspection. I was interviewed by one of the inspectors, a very attractive traditionalist. I told him I could integrate as an 0-6 or accept the regular appointment as an 0-8. He was opposed to my coming in via "the back door" as he put it, suggesting that integratees would never be fully accepted. I bought it. So I was appointed an 8 and kept the consular job for a little over a year as part of the rotation of new officers. Very exciting job.

Q: *I have you in Beirut from 1957 to 1960.*

SILVA: Right. In 1958 we had the evacuation. The Marines landed, on a beach crowded with astounded bikini clad Beirutis. That was exciting. Lots happened. I got to meet Kim Philby and that whole strange group out there.

Q: *Kim Philby was technically head of intelligence in the area but he was really working for the KGB.*

SILVA: He was the Third Man. He wasn't officially British Intelligence, because British Intelligence was the Consul General, the so-called Consul General of the Embassy whose name was Pierotti, an Irishman named Patrick Pierotti. Philby was there and given lots of deference by the British Embassy. Apparently they had an idea of what he was doing but theirs was a watching brief. He was sent there to put him on the periphery of affairs and keep him on ice. But I met him as part of the investigation that I tried to run into the murder of a prominent American citizen. This guy was a lawyer, a brilliant guy in his early '30s. He had a degree from Harvard Law and from Oxford. He had been hired by a major oil company right out Oxford and there he was in the Middle East representing the oil company. He was also gay, and he had become involved with the son of one of the company big-wigs and the big-wig didn't like that. I understand this fellow had run off with the son to what is now Yemen on a sort of romantic trip, and the young man, the son of the oil baron, had gotten into trouble with one of the local sheiks whose son was similarly inclined. So there was all sorts of talk of chopping their heads off, but they managed to escape. The case caused a furor in this little corner of the world, so that the oil baron decided to fire our lawyer friend. Our friend, the story went, left the company headquarters, which I guess then was in Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia, and took with him much of the company records, supposedly recording all kinds of nefarious doings in concessions, rights, bribery etc. He ended up in Beirut.

He was found dead in his apartment. The cleaning woman found him. The police came, and the police called the Consulate, the Protection and Welfare Officer (me) asking that I come to the murdered man's apartment. The body was gone but the apartment looked intact. No sign of any ruckus of any kind. According to one of his friends the victim had a very large and valuable collection of gold coins of some antiquity, some ancient Greek, Roman, Muslim pieces. A very valuable collection that apparently was kept in an unlocked desk drawer and had not been disturbed. The only thing that was missing was the files. Together with one of the Lebanese FSNs we started to take an inventory. I opened the drawers of two sets of file cabinets and all were empty. The police insisted they had taken nothing out of the apartment. Their theory was that the victim had taken a taxi home that night and hopefully invited the driver in. Once in the apartment, the driver, the theory went, was not so inclined and killed our friend. Since nothing of value seemed to be missing, I made some inquiries. I called Pierotti to talk to him about it, because our friend had letters, notes, calendar notations of encounters with various people, one of them being Kim Philby. I knew nothing of Philby's bisexual proclivities at the time but I called Pierotti and he acknowledged that he had known our friend and run into him occasionally at receptions where he seemed to know Philby. The upshot was that it was very clear that there was something very fishy with the man's death and the apparently missing files, but you couldn't prove it. The police weren't any help because they had immediately and conveniently assumed it was a homosexual murder. They would not entertain the notion that there was something much deeper here than what they

called "a hit." It was frustrating but it was one of many episodes in Beirut that made it an exciting place to be.

It's funny, I haven't done consular work since but I recall that some of the most exciting moments in the Foreign Service come to consular officers...certainly the most fun.

Q: *Oh absolutely, it's where you're really up against people.*

SILVA: For example, we got the visit of Danny Thomas.

Q: *He was a well-known comedian.*

SILVA: Yes, I think he's dead now. But anyway, he was a very nice man, genuinely amusing and a genuinely good person. He came to the Consulate to register like any good American citizen should. He was on his way to visit his family in the Cedars, a town called Besharre, where his family came from, and he was going to stay a week, that was it. Off he went. And it may have been four days later when he came back. He had been met originally by members of his family who drove him up to the little town and he took a taxi back. And his luggage was gone. His family had virtually cleaned him out. His shoes, his jackets, his pants. They just assumed, you know, that he was part of the family and share and share alike. He had become a success in the States, and the family had the right to share in it. Among other things they had convinced him to buy them a taxi so that they could go into business. His parting shot to the Embassy was "I'm never coming back." Similarly we had the case of a Lebanese/American woman who disappeared and who we later found was being held captive by relatives who wanted her to give them money.

Then we had the evacuation. The Marines landed, and a number of exciting moments followed.

Q: *This was a very important event in U.S. foreign relations, July 14, 1958, when the Marines landed in Lebanon under Eisenhower because of the overthrow of the King in Iraq and Nasser. Could you explain a bit about what you were seeing at the time, the situation?*

SILVA: Well, what we saw happen in Lebanon was a reflection of what Egypt's Nasser had inspired in the area. In effect Syria intervened very directly in what appeared to be an internal civil altercation in Lebanon. Muslim Lebanese were determined to overthrow the system of confessional government that had been established during the French Mandate. The system was established on the premise that the majority of the population was Christian--based on a census which the Muslims asserted was not accurate.

The government was to reflect the population. The Prime Minister was a Maronite Christian, the Deputy Prime Minister would be a Greek orthodox or whatever, and each cabinet position was designated by religion. So the Muslims found the moment in 1958 to try to redress the balance, so to speak. The Syrians, of course, came to their aid. There was some shooting going on, bombings, etc. The Nasser connection was there, it was obvious, so was the connection with the King of Iraq. But it seemed distant. The real problem was the confessional problem.

The Marines landed, they took control of the airport and moved into town. It was always maintained, erroneously of course, that it was bloodless. At least some Marines were killed at the airport, by snipers. There was never a confrontation between the Marines and whoever it was, but at night time, when the Marines were patrolling the perimeter of the airport they were killed. Thirty or so were killed, I was told. There were some real moments. The Ambassador at the time was Robert McClintock, a tough eccentric character, but marvelous in many ways. When they evacuated the Embassy most of the wives, my wife included, went to Rome. And they kept a skeleton Embassy, so to speak. I stayed, though I was among the lowest ranking officers of the Embassy. But I had a commission as a Consular Officer and as a Secretary in the diplomatic service. I was the only one in the Embassy who had both. The Ambassador wanted all of his skeleton staff to have diplomatic titles. And he wanted to have somebody with a Consular title. Now my boss, who was the Consul Fred Bohne, was a staff officer, without Diplomatic status. So I stayed. During that time a couple of interesting things happened. The Marines patrolled the downtown area around the outside of the "Basta" which then was the Muslim neighborhood of Beirut, a rabbit warren. There was actually a gate that you had to pass through to get into the Basta, and all of the houses of prostitution were just on the other side of the gate. It was a very interesting setup, because the other side of the square (Bab Idriss) was where many of the gold shops made part of the souks. At any rate, the Marines would patrol in a jeep armed with a 50-caliber machine gun every day. Once in broad daylight armed men came out of the Basta and captured the jeep, marines, and weapons and took them into their neighborhood. Enough people saw it happen that it was reported to the Embassy and the task force commander immediately. The commander of the task force was Admiral "Cat" Brown, he was, I think, then head of the Sixth Fleet. There was a hasty staff meeting called at the Embassy. The Admiral hemmed and hawed and wasn't certain what to do: Ambassador said he knew exactly what to do. He asked for a tank. As it was related to me, he went with the tank and a public address system and parked it in front of the Basta gate. The tank's 90-mm gun was pointed into the Basta and the interpreter on the loudspeaker announced that the gun would begin firing in three minutes if the marines, the jeep and weapons were not returned immediately. One shell will destroy X square meters, two shells will do more, etc. Many people will die. Within three minutes the Marines and the Jeep were out. Every last bullet came out. Cat Brown was astounded, because that's the last thing he would have done. He is reported to have asked McClintock if he would have really fired into the Basta. The answer was "of course."

Then we learned that in the town of Tripoli, a Muslim stronghold in the north, where Rashid Karami one of the leaders of the revolt came from, a group of American missionaries wanted to leave and were not able to. They did get a radio message to the Embassy, on what passed for an E&E net then. They said they were in danger of their lives and needed help to get out. McClintock held a staff meeting. As I recall the Political Counselor said their were Muslim roadblocks along the highway so that a rescue by convoy would be dangerous. An armed military convoy was suggested. It was turned down. We could not risk an armed confrontation with the peasant militias and face the resulting bad press. (This was the same ambassador who had threatened an entire neighborhood with a tank!) So I heard the Ambassador say, "Walter, go down to the port and commandeer any American vessel that can make the trip." I had no idea how to commandeer a vessel, or indeed whether I could! The Ambassador saw the quizzical look on my face and caught me in the hall. "Find an American-registered vessel in port and commandeer it for purposes of the government of the United States." I went to my office and scanned the consular regulations and the Code of Federal Regulations and found nothing to help me. So I went down to the port anyway.

There were two vessels in port, there was one huge freighter, an enormous thing, and there was a seismic research vessel that belonged to a Mobile, Alabama company. It was a magnificent thing, 150-feet long, modern, and it had millions of dollars worth of equipment on board for seismic research. They were on their way to the Gulf. The crew was made up of men from the Mobile area and Louisiana. Their English was nearly a foreign language. I told them that I had instructions from the Ambassador of the United States to take over the vessel. They thought I was crazy. The captain said "You can't do that!" And I said, "Oh yes, I can, the Ambassador represents the President of the United States and if he wants to take your ship for purposes of our government, he can do that." He thought a minute and then said "Okay, give me a piece of paper." I went back to the office and wrote something up on a piece of embossed paper decorated with a red seal and ribbons. I signed it, and the FSNs and driver signed it in Arabic. I returned to the ship and handed it to the Captain who said "Okay, just so mah ass is covered." When I told him we would be going to Tripoli at night he felt a good deal less covered. He wanted charts of the coast line which was dotted with rocks and shoals. We had none. Then he asked if someone who knew the coast could not go along. We had no one. "You know how much this boat is worth," he said, and added "When do you want to go?" I answered "We have to go tonight, to rescue a bunch of people in trouble, we can't go during the day." He was scared to death, the boat was a huge responsibility, he was going to sail up an unknown coast studded with submerged rocks and outcroppings of all kinds. But at that point he seemed to see the venture as an adventure and became almost enthusiastic. We left a little before sunset. I forget how long it took, but it was several hours. We got to Tripoli in the moonlight with only the outline of the city ahead. The captain said, "Now, I don't know how to get into that dock. I don't know where the channel is. And I've got $5 million worth of boat here." As we neared the port, with our own lights blazing, we started getting blinking lights from the pier, automobile headlights obviously. The captain dropped the anchor. I got into a dinghy with one of the crew and we putt-putted to the pier. There we found a small group of missionaries, about a dozen altogether, with half a dozen cars flicking headlights off and on. "We want to go back with you," one said, "but most of the people are taking the road to Beirut." So, we took them on board, their luggage, dogs and cats, and had a pleasant, incident free daylight sail back to Beirut. It was mid-morning when we got back, and there at the pier was Ambassador McClintock with the press, Time Magazine, Newsweek, the Washington Post, the New York Times, you name it, all the press waited with their cameras to record the arrival. Ambassador McClintock and the missionaries with the boat in the background. As a matter of fact, he did make Newsweek magazine with the story about the besiege missionaries who were saved with a bold stroke.

Of course, at the same time, the rest of the missionaries had arrived by road. When they finally got there and came into the Consulate I asked if they had had any trouble. They asserted they had none. There were roadblocks, but the people were very friendly and waved them through. But I had had an exciting boat trip, risked a several million dollar boat that I had taken over with no legal ground to stand on. It was that kind of post. Never dull.

Then there was the case of the Mafia courier. This guy turned up at the consulate to register with a passport that said "John Green." A few days later he was arrested for the inability to pay his hotel bill. I visited him in Jail. He asked me to get in touch with his girl friend to see if she could pay his bill and get him out. I found her working a bar stool in one of the less fashionable night clubs in town. She couldn't or wouldn't help. Meanwhile the police went through his belongings and found

a large fortune in bonds. The bonds it turned out had been stolen some years earlier in Montreal in what up to then had been the largest robbery in Canada.

In sum, the stolen bonds had been moved to one of the less reputable banks in the Cayman Islands until the clamor had died down. Green was charged with delivering them to Israel where they would be sold. Coming by way of Beirut was a particularly stupid move since he could not legally pass to Israel from Lebanon and would have to go back to Cyprus to make it. At any rate Green languished in Jail until after I left the post with the FBI trying to extradite him to the U.S.

Q: *Did you get a feel for how this Embassy operated? I mean you had this very divided country, you had the Maronites who were Christian, who worked very hard at cultivating foreigners, from what I gather, and then your Muslims, who were not as plugged in, you might say, did you...*

SILVA: They changed overnight. I think the Muslims always felt somewhat peripheral in their own society. Before the invasion, before the landing of the Marines, my wife had good experiences. We had a small child, three or four years old, we lived in an apartment on Rue Jeanne D'Arc. The caretaker, the concierge, Joseph, lived on the ground floor. Joseph, despite his name, was a Muslim. Joseph adored our son, absolutely adored him, he just huddled around him and liked to take him to the store where you could buy little matchbox cars -- and Joseph didn't make that kind of money. But he was delighted with the child. After the invasion he wanted nothing to do with him, absolutely nothing. He changed completely. Mary used to go down and shop on the main street, El Hamra street, and they were all friendly to her. After the invasion -- nothing. One guy in a kaffiyah spit at her. It was changed, absolutely changed, as though the Muslims felt somehow empowered by the invasion. At that time, after the evacuation, I took in two UN pilots. I had an apartment and I was alone, and the UN had asked for billets. So I took these two swedes into our apartment. They were piloting Piper Cubs and doing surveillance over the Lebanese-Syrian border. And they would come back at night, usually very angry. Eventually it all came out. They had continually spotted mule trains, donkey trains coming over the mountains loaded with ammunition, guns, etc., and they reported it to their headquarters. The head of the UN force at the time was an Indian general, from India, and he would accept none of it. They would tell him over and over again that the Syrians were major players in the fighting but he would not accept it, because it brought in complications. He wanted to put it in a pigeon hole and hoped it would go away. Our Embassy reported it, I think probably as a result of my reports to the Political Section. Nobody paid a hell of a lot of attention to it, though it was a major factor in what went on and what's happening today, with the present Syrian role in Lebanon.

Q: *We were talking about the situation there, that all of you were very much involved in things, of course it was very small at the time.*

SILVA: There was a curfew from 6:00 to 6:00. Everyone in the Embassy got a curfew pass. It was a very Middle Eastern arrangement. There was a severe curfew, you could be shot down in the street. And the day the curfew was established we got passes for everyone in the Embassy. Within a week it seemed everybody in Beirut had a curfew pass! The nightclubs never closed, the bars never closed. We were in a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan curfew. But you know the fact that there had been the evacuation and the wives were all gone, families were absent, brought the members of the Embassy together. Because there was some danger...there were a couple of times when

bullets were fired through my windows, and one evening a group from the Embassy was having dinner in a colleague's apartment when a bomb went off in the street below. That sort of thing tended to bring people together. There was undeniably a delicious sense of risk when you ignored the curfew. And we went places that I never would have gone as a married person -- the bars, the belly-dance places. There was a sense of camaraderie among the staff that you don't always get. And the discussion was always about Lebanon, what was going on, who was involved, that sort of thing.

Q: *Did you find yourself captured by any particular segment of Lebanese social life?*

SILVA: The Maronites from the very beginning. Most of the local staff, not all but most, were Maronites. The Maronites tended to be better educated, they were schooled by the French, a lot of them had been to France for university, so they were the ones the Embassy tended to hire. When you got down into the administrative part of the Embassy, the blue collars of the General Services unit, they tended to be Muslims. But anyplace where it took some skill at writing they were Maronites. When I did a stint of six months on the rotation, I was an economic officer for six months, and I was the disbursing officer for six months too. In the disbursing office we had one Muslim, one Maronite and one Druze. Very unusual. And they got along very well, even during the worst troubles. But then in a situation like that, thrown into an environment of multiple sects, consciously sectarian, they were very careful among themselves, they would never get into religious discussions. You never got that.

Q: *When the Embassy was small did you get the feeling that the Ambassador or political officers or others could reach out to other sectors of the political spectrum to find out how things were going?*

SILVA: Well they were seeing the elected officials on a fairly regular basis, and the major figures of the opposition. There was a leading figure of the opposition, a major leader, Saeb Salaam, who lived in a villa right next to the golf course. The opposite side of the course bordered on a Palestinian refugee camp. So when we played golf there was always a chance of some gunfire. We'd call off the game and then go back. Saeb Salaam was supposed to be very anti-American, yet there were people from the Embassy who saw him. The political counselor saw him, I don't think as often as he ought to have. But then to develop the kind of entree you ought to have is difficult in the middle of a civil war.

Q: *Did you have the feeling we were trying to disengage by being overly associated with the Christians or...*

SILVA: No, I don't think so. I think we were really trying to play an honest broker role. We were committed to trying. Perhaps the error was we were too willing to make compromises in order to achieve that and the compromises led to strengthening the Syrian factor of the equation and weakening that part of Lebanese society that made the system work, which happened to be mostly Christian -- Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox. My God, you had 10-15 major sects involved. But those who made things work, ran the businesses, tended to be the Christian element. Even the Palestinian refugees who assimilated into Lebanese society and became successful businessmen tended to be Christians too.

Q: *Was it quite clear that Nasser was not a big player in the game from the Embassy point of view? Because from abroad it was viewed as a nationalistic, Nasseristic system.*

SILVA: Well, the Nasserist movement was the catalyst in Lebanon, but then it took on a life of its own. I don't think anywhere else in Nasser's little world did religious issues play the central role in quite the same way.

Q: *At this time when you were there I was in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and we were concerned about the stability of the Saudi government and there were a lot of pictures on thermoses and everything else in the [souk] of Nasser around. And we were, you know, sort of, when the landings came we thought there might be some sort of mass uprising, which there wasn't. What was the general feeling in the Embassy about the landings? A good thing, a bad thing?*

SILVA: Many, I think, in the Embassy thought it was stupid and unnecessary. And the fact that it took place with such apparent ease made it look ridiculous. Threading their way through bikini-clad sunbathers and that sort of thing. It was held up to ridicule by the American press. And it was held up to ridicule there. Necessary for what? It was sold partly on the basis that we needed this force to permit the evacuation of Americans, that was absolutely ridiculous. You could have driven south with no danger into Israel, the airport was never closed, there were sea lanes wide open, lots of ships around. There would be no problem.

Q: *Where did it come from? Was the Ambassador calling for this?*

SILVA: Yeah, I think Robert McClintock enjoyed the military aspect of his job, where he could flex his muscles.

Q: *When you were doing this on the Consular side, was there a rush of people trying to get out of Lebanon?*

SILVA: No. I was on the other side, but nonetheless there was not a rush on the visa side either. There were a large number of Lebanese-Americans who lived there at the time, they weren't trying to escape either.

Q: *Well, you left there in 1960, and then what did you do?*

RICHARD E. UNDELAND
Junior Officer Trainee
Beirut (1957)

Public Affairs Assistant, USIS
Beirut (1958)

Richard E. Undeland was born in Nebraska in 1930 and educated at Harvard University and Stanford University. His career included positions in Beirut, Tunis,

Alexandria, Saigon, Algiers, and Amman. Mr. Undeland was interviewed in 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: So you came in when in 1957?

UNDELAND: In March 1957. It took a long time for me to get my security clearance, because of my time in Egypt and the dislocations caused by the '56 War. The Agency's security types tried to have the tremendously reduced Cairo Embassy staff run the usual checks, but were told to go fly a kite; they had other things on their plate. Ever resourceful, the security types came to me, seeking names of some people I had known in Egypt who had returned to the States. I mentioned 3 or 4, who were interviewed, so the requisite boxes were filled. I was amused by the irony of having in some measure dictated my own security clearance.

After a short period as a Junior Officer Trainee in Washington, a matter of a few weeks, I went to Beirut. I was in the third or fourth JOT class, I believe.

Q: *How big was your JOT group?*

UNDELAND: We were about twelve and came from all over the States, but geography apart we were a pretty homogenous bunch. There was one woman, no blacks. In Washington, we had lectures and discussion sessions, and we observed the workings of the various USIA offices. It was a pretty worthless time, making so little impression on me, I can remember hardly any details. Then we went to the field. The usual time was for nine months, although that could vary considerably.

Q: *Was Lebanon your choice, or was the fact that you had been in Egypt relevant to it?*

UNDELAND: I had requested the Arab world, but not Lebanon specifically. My time in Egypt was, I suppose, seen as relevant, but I never heard about the Agency's thinking on this.

Q: *What was the situation? You arrived in Beirut in 1957. The Suez Crisis in October, November, 1956, was finished, but the aftermath still must have been around.*

UNDELAND: The aftermath effect was present, and Beirut was a place where inter-Arab politics were part of the landscape, but the rapidly growing Lebanese crisis was mostly Lebanese and not in its essential parts connected with Suez. The fighting that took place in late 1957 and 1958 stemmed from President Chamoun striving to have a second term, which violated the constitution and was vigorously opposed by most Lebanese, except for his Maronite backers. At its height in early to mid-1958, there was nightly fighting in the streets of Beirut punctuated by the sound of gunfire and explosions. In fact, casualties were not high, but it was noisy.

During our first months there, we traveled quite freely around the country, but soon more and more places were put out of bounds until by the end 1957 or early 1958, we were pretty much restricted to the city. Not long after came the nightly curfew. Our oldest child was born in June, 1958, and when my wife urgently had to go back to the AUB hospital, getting the required special authorization permitting the ambulance to come to the house was touch and go. That was the

tensest moment in my more than 35 years abroad.

We used to have evening parties almost every night on Ain el Mraisi Street, where we lived, made possible by "bribing" the Lebanese policeman assigned there to enforce the curfew. So long as we promised not to leave the street, he let us go freely from house to house, provided we first paid the "bribe" of a large bowl of chocolate pudding, which he passionately loved. Typically, he saw himself as much more our protector than the enforcer of the curfew. Let me add we encountered a lot of this human warmth and concern from the Lebanese living on that street, who offered to take us in at any time. This was only the first of several times this has happened during crises in the Arab World.

Q: *Well, now, as a junior trainee.... Let's start in 1957, before things began to fall apart. First, what was your impression of the Embassy at that time?*

UNDELAND: I don't really have that much of an impression of the Mission as a whole, that is, outside of USIS. Although I had some dealings with those outside USIS, I didn't get to know well anyone on the Embassy staff. The Ambassador was autocratic and colorful and was the source of bemusement and numerous stories.

Q: *Robert McClintock?*

UNDELAND: Yes. I personally shook his hand a couple of times and exchanged a platitude or two, but nothing more.

Let me go back to USIS, where everybody was most helpful to this new boy on the block. A fine group of officers and other staff and a very good place to start the career. I was extremely fortunate in my first PAO, John Nevins, who knew how to size up and bring along a young officer better than almost anyone else I have met in the Agency. His successor, Ed Brooke, was also very good for me.

The cultural officer had to go home for health reasons, so I stepped in and took on this job, which was far better than being in a training status, i.e. doing and being responsible rather than merely helping and observing. I handled two large projects. The first was the visit of the Minneapolis Symphony, which with the instruments arrived one midnight from Kuwait in two DC-6s. It was a testing experience, for the Lebanese Foreign Ministry was dismayed to find out that some 60 percent of the musicians were Jews, and wondered whether they should be let in. Then, the orchestra's conductor, Antal Dorati, and Anis Fuleihan, the Lebanese-American director of the Lebanese National Conservatory (and close friend of Chamoun, who loved classical music), had long been at loggerheads. Fortunately, both put on their best behavior towards each other. The two performances came off as planned, but audiences were small, as the growing fears and tensions made many Beirutis fearful of being out after dark. My second big project was the "Family of Man" photography exhibit, which we mounted in the hall of a UNESCO building. President Chamoun, surrounded by gun toting guards, attended a special opening, but the authorities then determined it was too dangerous to open it to the public, so we packed up the exhibit and sent it on. These made for a heady beginning for an officer just starting out.

I also handled a number of exchange programs, worked with the Library staff and met quite a few Beirutis. It was there I realized personal contacts would lie at the heart of how I would go about conducting USIS business. That view has never changed.

Q: *How did you find planning in USIA?*

UNDELAND: Planning from Washington, once it got away from the judgment and wants of people in the field was often unrealistic and could at times border on the ridiculous. Headquarters should not and cannot be ignored, but all too often it has marched to its own drum beat, removed from the reality of the milieus in which we operate, and that's when things have gone awry. I don't want to seem too critical here, for there has been far more good than bad Washington planning, more that is realistic than not. It has benefited by having much of the brain power at the center come from the field, that is, with a strong field sense based on experience. The biggest problem has always been when a new administration comes in, no difference whether Democrat or Republican. The new appointees, suspicious of the old, have been looking for new ideas, new methods and mechanisms, new approaches -- indeed a new agenda. This is fair enough, for things should change to reflect the new administration. But there has also been much that remained valid, and it was here the educating process was joined and from my vantage point, continuation and continuity have usually emerged more victorious than radical change. But what a lot of *sturm und drang* has had to be gone through before that happened. The political appointees, who came in at the top and sometimes also fairly far down the line, have in the long run mostly come around to practical conclusions not all that different from those of their predecessors and often exactly the same.

A key point in USIA's decision making was taken long ago, when the power of the budget was put in the hands of PAOs, of course with ambassadorial approval, giving them the power to turn down any proposed program or any product they found unsuitable to the operation, by not agreeing to use the budget they control to pay for it. That is stated too baldly, for the Washington-field consultative process has always been ongoing, with Washington setting overall guidelines and approving country plans. Still, the field has been able to say no when it wanted to. An example. In the early 70s, the Agency's motion picture people produced a tasteless, unconvincing, counterproductive documentary on the war in Vietnam, which we in the field were asked to evaluate and order for potential placement and other usage. Some PAO's I knew ordered a copy for so-called "in-house" use, saying in couched terms it was not useful with our designated audiences and so forth. This was the cowardly route, and I must admit that in this case I, then PAO in Jordan, was among the cowards who took it, but the Beirut PAO, Phil Brooks who died tragically young, sent back the famous cable, evaluating the film as "obscene" and ordering no copies. He had his way, and I'm unaware he got any serious flak for it.

Another example: Under both Carter and Reagan administrations, group International Visitor projects were devised to bring journalists, academics and officials to the U.S. to see and then supposedly return to relate all the wonderful things being accomplished by these administrations. Nothing in any way wrong with that idea, but both projects were so partisan to be unrealistic and would probably have had exactly the opposite effect on participants that what was desired. In any case, there were not enough nominations from the field to justify these projects going forward, and both were canceled for lack of nominees. I nominated for neither.

For annual planning, guidelines and areas of desired emphasis have been rightly set by USIA, but the details, putting the meat on the bones has come from the field and that's the way it should be. Maybe things have changed now, and maybe in the post-Cold War era they should, but in my days the system as it was worked pretty darned well.

WILLIAM D. WOLLE
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1957-1958)

William D. Wolle was born in Iowa on March 11, 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from Morningside College and a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1946-1947. Mr. Wolle was an Arabic language officer whose overseas posts included Baghdad, Aden, Kuwait, Amman, and Beirut. He was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *During the time you were included in the Beirut Embassy, what was the situation in Lebanon and what did you end up doing?*

WOLLE: The Lebanese were threatening each other. Normal politics was collapsing. They began shooting each other. There began to be things like a bus being blown up now and then for no good reason; firing at night. As I recall one of the things that really started it off was the assassination of a well-known Lebanese journalist, whose name I have now forgotten. One thing led to another. Before the spring ended the security situation had deteriorated to the extent that USG dependents were given the choice of being voluntarily evacuated if they wished. My own family declined, staying until the very last plane out which in fact was a day or two after the US Marines landed on the beach in July, 1958.
There were some stone throwing incidents that I had to drive the car through, but nothing that really made me feel particularly unsafe.

Q: *When the situation started getting difficult, what were you doing in the Embassy then?*

WOLLE: I had been assigned to the economic/commercial section of the Embassy working for Enoch Duncan and doing some routine reporting on various economic and commercial matters...a lot of World Trade Directory reports and things like that. A couple of my colleagues had been assigned to other parts of the Embassy, others had been transferred out of the country.

One of the things that some of us were doing was going around almost nightly, or let's say in the afternoons, to the major hotels in town where Americans were staying and filling them in on the security situation. Telephone connections were not always very good. I can remember a good many trips to the St. George's and other hotels. Of course, as soon as the Marines landed the Lebanese stopped shooting at each other and the situation was eventually resolved. A blood and guts Ambassador arrived in the person of Robert McClintock...not to say anything deprecating about Ambassador Donald Heath who had been there before.

Q: *He was a much milder soul in a way wasn't he?*

WOLLE: Yes and I got to know him particularly well later on in Saudi Arabia. The Lebanese security situation went from bad to very good almost overnight in the fall of 1958. Families were allowed back in, I think, by that fall, though in my case I was transferred out of Lebanon by the beginning of October.

Q: *This was the hey day of Nasserism and all, what was your view and the Embassy's view of Nasserism?*

WOLLE: Well, views varied in the Embassy, but certainly the scene in Beirut was Nasser's scene. His portraits were everywhere. The banners across the street, the parades...it certainly was the era of Nasser as the person who stood up to the British and the French. But deeper then that, of course, there were all of these splits that still exist in Lebanon among the religious groups and political parties.

We would sometimes get certain inside accounts of what was going on in that regard from some of our language instructors, even before the days when the crisis erupted. Among them there were some Christians of different persuasions, and two Muslims, and while they stuck to their guns on the language most of the time, they enjoyed as well as we did spending some of the breaks talking about Lebanese politics and civil and religious divisions.

Q: *It was a very complicated situation. When the Marines landed there, were there some apprehension on our part as to whether this thing would work or not?*

WOLLE: Oh, I think there was some in the early weeks, but there were never any really serious violations of the cease fire and so confidence built rapidly. When the Lebanese agreed on Gen. Fuad Chehab to take over and bring the country into a situation of general obedience nobody was too surprised.

I felt I would have learned a good deal more about Lebanese internal politics had I known French because certainly then, and maybe even for many years after that, a working knowledge of French was the real key to getting into the intricacies of the Lebanese as far as personal contacts were concerned. That is unless one had really fluent Arabic.

Q: *The second Ambassador that came while you were there was Robert McClintock who was one of the great characters of the Foreign Service along with his poodle dogs, I think. What was your impression of him and how he operated at that time?*

WOLLE: In Beirut my impression was that he was a gung ho type of person, vigorous, determined to make a mark, a real personality. But the best stories I have about Ambassador McClintock came a bit later when I was in Aden, my next post.

He and Mrs. McClintock, without their poodles, paid a visit to Aden. They wanted to see Aden...I think they went on to two or three other posts in the region. They flew in and were our house

guests. As I recall Bill Crawford, my boss in Aden, was away at that time...up in Yemen, perhaps. So Mimmi and I had the McClintocks as house guests. She went shopping with Mrs. McClintock and from what she said Mrs. McClintock was every bit as bold as her husband. In fact the story about her was that Mimmi was driving the car and they spied a rare parking spot near the shopping center. Before they could get into it another car was heading for the same spot so Mrs. McClintock dashed out of the car, ran to this open parking space and literally laid down on it to scare the other car away until my wife could park.

By the way Rob McClintock was a great swimmer. He always had a back problem so I understand for his health he had developed a habit of swimming. We took them out both afternoons they were there and he swam back and forth longer then I could keep track of doing his daily exercises.

Q: *By the way on that I heard somebody say that he did this in practically subfreezing weather one time at some post.*

WOLLE: The McClintocks were to leave Aden on a P&O Line steamer. We arrived at the dock and went on board with them because it wasn't sailing for another 45 minutes or so. Together we sort of looked around the boat. He observed the lounge and the people there. He peered into the dining room where the first sitting was having a meal. There were gray heads everywhere. He turned to us and said something like, "Well, we certainly will be the only passengers under 70 on the whole boat." Not his kind of crowd. But off they went.

MICHAEL E. STERNER
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1958-1960)

Ambassador Michael E. Sterner was born in New York in 1920. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. He served in the U.S. Army prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1951. Ambassador Sterner served in Aden, Beirut, Cairo, Washington, DC, and was ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed in 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *Now, you went into Arabic training. Is that right?*

STERNER: Yes, I left early since it was short of the normal two-year junior assignment in a post. I spent eighteen months in Aden, then went up to a class that was opening in Arabic in Beirut. I'd indicated my interest in this. I had learned some Arabic during my stay in Saudi Arabia but not very systematically because I had not had any training opportunities there. The FSI course had recently moved from Washington to Beirut, which was an enormous asset. It was great to be in the spot, and Beirut itself was a fascinating place. It was just coming out of the crisis of 1958 when I arrived. I got there in October of 1958 and the marines had just withdrawn. The Chehab Government had been installed, but there were still the occasional explosion going off somewhere in the city. But once it quieted down it was great being a student at that time. In contrast to the embassy officers who were very busy with day to day political responsibilities, the students had an

opportunity to look into the causes of the conflict, to talk with the Lebanese in a way that political officers could not. On the other hand, we were constantly meeting with the political officers because we were a resource that they could draw on. We had leisure to get to parts of Lebanon that they simply didn't have time to get to. So we could travel around a bit, and had a great time, learned some Arabic apparently. Looking back on the tragedy of Lebanon, it was a sort of wholesome period too. Both the Muslims and the Christians who had gone through this period seemed to derive a healthy lesson from the 1958 experience, and to be determined that this sort of thing would never happen again. Of course, they were so wrong about that.

Q: *This was a time of unity. You did not see this thing as being the next Belfast?*

STERNER: No, it was hard to predict that it would go in that direction. Of course we were all conscious of the deep divisions in Lebanese society, which had been exacerbated by the Nasser phenomenon and by Chamoun's stubborn effort to continue in office when it was quite clear it was against the constitution. There was much blame on both sides. The Nasserists were very aggressive, did not have the Lebanese interests primarily in mind. They were Arab nationalists, didn't care what happened to the Christian minorities and other people who didn't share their enthusiasm for Arab nationalism. But when Chehab came in, there was a moment of hope that the Lebanese, Muslim and Christian, would see that this involvement in broader Arab affairs would end up being a tragedy for Lebanon, and that somehow they had to preserve the comity of their own little nation. Their prosperity, their political health depended on that, and for a while they did that. Then it of course broke down later.

Q: *I wonder if you could talk a little about the people taking Arabic with you? You're an Arabist, and the Arabists in the Foreign Service are often accused of being a particular breed. At that time, how you did you see it and how you did you see Israel?*

STERNER: It's hard to tell exactly who was motivated to get into the course. Most of the people in the course had by this time either had a post or like myself, a job perhaps concerning the Middle East, or post-graduate study in the Middle East. Arabic training represented a rather major investment. Arabic is perhaps not the toughest language in the world for westerners but it certainly harder that your average European language. You not only have to spend a good bit of time to get your teeth into it, but then you have to make a commitment to work at it after that. And you can't really do that unless you go to Arabic-speaking countries and that requires a career commitment in that direction. So we had people who were interested in either the Middle East as a culture, or, motivating many of us, including myself, what looked like a good career path from the point of view of professional challenges. After all, you study Amharic, and there's only one place to go to speak Amharic. Arabic had the enormous advantage of having a dozen posts you could go to in those days, and even more now, where you could speak the language.

Q: *Also it was rather an exciting time as far as the Arab world was concerned.*

STERNER: Very exciting. All these things were happening that we've been talking about.

Q: *FSO's like to go where the action is. We work better, and usually move ahead faster.*

STERNER: That's right. There was much of that spirit. In my class there were only three students. That was a bit smaller than average. But there were plenty of candidates in those days. Now, on the Arab-Israel problem, you've got to bear in mind that we were neophytes at this point, all young folks, who had not had concentrated experience in dealing with the Arab-Israel issue. As one who had never visited Israel, and who had a private sector job in one Arab country, and a diplomatic assignment in another Arab country, at a time when Arab nationalism was a fever particularly among youth in the Arab world, and particularly at Aramco where I had made friends with many Palestinians, I was, I'm sure, sympathetic to the Arab point of view about the Arab-Israel problem. I frame it in those terms because, having subsequently spent a large part of my professional career on this issue, it's hard for me to remember exactly what my feelings and attitudes were at the time. But, I certainly must have felt that the Palestinians had had a grave injustice done to them.

Q: *I might break in here to emphasize the point that so many of our intellectual and professional element we were dealing with were so often Palestinian, because these were the best educated people throughout the Arab world. It would be almost equivalent to working in California with the Armenians and you didn't have a chance to hear the Turkish side of the Armenian-Turkish thing. As far as you were concerned you were hearing one side, which had a very good case. Both sides have a good case, but these were people who had been kicked out of their homes.*

STERNER: Absolutely. To give you an example of how vivid that sort of thing can be, I was in Aramco at one of the pump stations where there were only a handful of people there on the Tapline . Each of those stations had a little hospital and the hospitals were run either by Lebanese or Palestinians. The station where I was at for quite a bit of time, the hospital doctor was a Palestinian who was a wonderful guy, and to this day remains a personal friend. I spent many an evening with him talking about the Arab-Israel problem and, his experiences. He owned a house in Jaffa, which he was no longer free to go to and which an Israeli had just moved into, and there was enormous bitterness. Some of that certainly conveyed itself to me as a vivid experience. Another example is that I wanted to make a trip to Jerusalem which I'd never seen. My interpreter -- I didn't have enough Arabic in those days to deal with the tribes, and I had a Sudanese interpreter assigned to me -- and I took an overland trip to Jerusalem through Jordan. In fact we hitch-hiked for most of the journey. We got a tanker truck that was rolling along on the IPC line that stopped...

Q: *I just want to switch tape sides. Now, you were saying...*

STERNER: We were hitchhiking to Jerusalem. Somehow we got there. Since my friend didn't have much money, we stayed in a very simple hotel in Jerusalem -- no westerners -- just other Arabs. It was this kind of immediate experience that you have as a young man that wouldn't happen to you at a later stage of life, that made terribly deep impressions on your way of thinking and on your emotional outlook at that time. So I'm sure I was sympathetic to the Arab cause. One thing that tended to give me a little balance, perhaps two things, I was brought up in New York City. Therefore, as a matter of course I knew many Jews. I put it in those terms because if you come from Omaha, Nebraska it would have been a different experience. I therefore had a consciousness of what the creation of the State of Israel meant to the Jewish community. But I would say that it was not nearly as vivid and immediate as this experience I was living in the Arab world. But I wanted to visit Israel. In those days you could take your car and drive down to Israel from Lebanon. You went through the border point at Ras Naqurah. It was not long afterwards that

the border was closed and you could no longer make that trip. We had a little Morris Minor convertible and so we...

Q: *You were married then.*

STERNER: Yes, my wife came along and we went down just as tourists. Crossing the border in those days was an of eerie experience. There was a four kilometers stretch of no-man's land between the Lebanese outposts and the Israelis. You couldn't drive in Israel with Lebanese diplomatic plates so you went to a Lebanese garage and you rented a set of American plates. You could drive in Israel with American plates. Then in the middle of this no-man's land -- you could feel the binoculars from both sides peering down at you -- you got out with screwdriver and pliers and unscrewed the Lebanese diplomatic plates, threw them in the trunk, put on the other plates, and drove on. This was the beginning of an awareness of how effective the Israelis were in public relations. We checked into our hotel in Haifa, and the next morning the phone rang and it said, Hello, I'm Shlomo, or whoever, and I'm part of whatever government agency it was to welcome tourists, and we understand you are down here from Lebanon. We hope you have a very good time and we don't want to impose in any way, but would you in the course of your trip like to be invited into the homes of some Israeli people? We said of course we'd enjoy that very much. And so we were. We met people who were genuinely warm and hospitable, and, of course, we got an exposure to the other point of view. Certainly we came away with the impression that Israel was an extraordinarily vibrant, and in those days, a very strong place. There was enormous conviction that they were a frontier land and it was imbued with idealism much of which unfortunately has faded. Today Israeli society is deeply polarized. That was not the case in those days. We went to a couple of *kibbutzim* which were very interesting, and that visit, although lasting only two weeks, also had a good deal of impact. I was glad I did it.

ROBERT THEODORE CURRAN
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1959-1961)

Robert Theodore Curran was born in New York in 1931. He received his bachelor's degree from Haverford College and his master's degree from Columbia University. During Mr. Curran's career he had positions in Germany, Jordan, Yemen, Mexico, Afghanistan, and Morocco. Mr. Curran was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1998.

CURRAN: And I must say, the Foreign Service Institute, which is mostly run by European language scholars, were completely unsympathetic to the problems of students of Arabic. The British, by way of contrast, took their Arabists off to a village in the mountains of Lebanon, with the families, and you lived in what was sort of a movie-set village. I mean, all the villagers were in on the act, and they spoke simple Arabic at the beginning and more complicated as you got more advanced, but you and our family were immersed in the culture. And they, of course, started students on literary or written Arabic right away. Why our country couldn't come up with that, I don't know.

Well, after 12 difficult months in Washington, we were transferred to the Beirut school, and at least now the students were submerged in an Arabic-speaking city. But again, our American linguist supervisors were academics, completely uninterested in foreign service needs or in Foreign Service officers, and to add to that, the embassy didn't accredit us to Lebanon, so we were on our own for logistic support. For example, we couldn't have a diplomatic automobile. We did get apartments, but all the furniture we had to provide ourselves. I mean, it was really a mess, and a disgrace, really, a serious waste of resources, because we lost at least six months of learning the language.

Lebanon, in the summer of 1960 was a badly divided place. Superficially some people said, "Oh, Beirut's the Paris of the Middle East," but the Paris of the Middle East existed in a very badly divided and upset country. The French had devised a formula which basically was designed to protect the Christian, pro-French elite. The government was divided into three parts: a Christian president, a Sunni Muslim prime minister, and a Shia Muslim Speaker of the House. And supposedly they divided power. As this formula unraveled through the years, the Christians became increasingly a minority government. I don't know whether there's an easy answer to why there are fewer Christian children than Muslim children, but in any event there were. And also the French contract took no account of the substantial Druze population, so Lebanon was a real powder keg. It had blown up once before. Eisenhower had had to send the Marines in in the late '50s.

Q: *'58.*

CURRAN: '58. And we did keep a substantial carrier force in the area. But we really, as I'll say in a few minutes, paid very little attention to the realities of what was going on in Lebanon, and we paid a dear price later on when the Palestinian powder keg was thrown into that mix. Everything blew up in our faces.

We had very few Arabic-speaking officers in the embassy. I can remember two. One was in AID and the other was in USIS. And the embassy officers themselves were unable to deal with or understand what was going on. They talked to the AUB people, American University of Beirut, a terrific university and a marvelous investment of American resources, and of course there were French-speaking elites among the Arabs, that is, among the Lebanese, not all of whom were Arabs.

Q: *Who was the ambassador?*

CURRAN: McClintock was still the ambassador, Robert McClintock, a real proconsul type, went around with a riding crop in one hand and a big black poodle. He took the poodle to official calls, and if you know anything about the Middle East, you know that dogs are not exactly the most welcome of household animals. So anyway, it was kind of prototypical of the approach the U.S. took. We sent a diplomat who was a swashbuckler and took great pride in having waded ashore *à la* MacArthur with the Marines, and so on. The great surprise to the American soldiers was that the first line of resistance were little boys selling Coca-Cola, and the second line - you could imagine what they were selling.

Language school went more smoothly in Beirut. Again, there were opportunities to get out in the

country, and we actually met a few Arabic speaking Lebanese. I was talking to my wife last night, and remember a limited number of special events. Mostly it was a struggle for survival there. The big event for us was the birth of our first child, Sara, at AUB hospital. That was very exciting, of course, and the second, I would say - you could call it a sort of seminal event - was toward the end of my language study I was assigned or I guess you could say I'd bulldozed my way into being assigned to a village in southern Lebanon to live with a family for the better part of three weeks. The town was Nabatia, which was a Shia town. Do you want me to go into the difference between Shia and Sunni Muslim?

Q: *You might just briefly mention this, yes, I mean at that time.*

CURRAN: Well, it's always been the same. When the Prophet Mohammed died, he left his religious oversight to a series of successors (caliphs), who practiced the way of the Prophet. They became the Sunni Muslims, or you could say loosely, orthodox Muslims. And in Mesopotamia a different strand of Islam emerged from Muslims who believed that there was more or less constant revelations going on and that a series of imams was the source of these revelations. Whereas the Sunni, or orthodox, Muslims believe that everything that had been said had been said by the Prophet and written down. And eventually these two main streams evolved into - it's hard to use these words, but I would say - sort of orthodox Muslims, the Sunni Muslims, and you could say less orthodox, maybe more emotional, maybe rather more fundamentalist Muslims called Shia.

Anyway, this episode in my Foreign Service career was a terrific language-learning experience. I went to a town where nobody spoke English, and I had enough grammar and vocabulary and structure training so that I was able to sop up the rhythm of the language, and it really turned the tide for me in learning the language. When I got back from Nabatia, I started dreaming in my sleep in Arabic, and people always say that's where you know you've turned the corner. So there was the language experience, and also the first encounter for me in Nabatia with the kind of the fanaticism vis-à-vis the Israelis that the U.S. now encounters almost on a daily basis. Nabatia was within eye-shot of Israel, and the people weren't personal to me about Israel, but they would literally foam at the mouth talking about what they alleged the Israelis had done to the Middle East. My wife and new baby joined me on a long weekend, and during that time it was the festival of "Ashura." "Festival" isn't quite the word. It was observance of Ashura, which is the commemoration (that's a better word) of the martyrdom of Ali's son and grandson at the hands of the Sunni Muslims. And because Ali and his cohorts were betrayed, the *Ashura*, or the blame, contrition, for this act is celebrated every year. And the way it's done is people flagellate themselves first to the point of bleeding and then make a small razor cut in their head and then walk through the streets patting their heads to keep the blood flowing, and, of course, the blood flows down on their clothes and they, of course, are chanting religious slogans. It's just unimaginable now that an American would even be invited or dare to attend something like that, but we sat on the rooftop and nobody paid any attention to us and went ahead with their ceremony. So I suppose I could say I was pretty fortunate to be allowed to be included in something like that, and it gave me a different insight into a part of Islam that I otherwise wouldn't have had.

Following that, I was so excited by being immersed in the Nabatia language and cultural situation, I talked the school into letting me take a three-week trip through the Middle East from town to town using the *servis* taxi system. I don't know if you know how that works, but in the Middle East

of those days, you went down to the central market, and here were a series of diesel- burning Mercedes taxicabs. We would call them five- passenger cars, but, of course, many more people traveled in them.

Q: *180s in those days.*

CURRAN: Yes, 180s or maybe lower, I don't know. Anyway, you would look for the sign to the city of destination. My first stop was Damascus, so I looked for a sign saying Ash-Sham, and you went over there and someone came up to you and said, "Are you interested in going?" "Yes, how much?" Of course, you already knew how much, but they'd bargain a little bit, and then when you had assembled a crowd of seven or eight, off you went. And I can't remember what the cost was, five dollars, maybe, to get to Damascus. And the wonderful thing about it for me was it turned out to be a terrific language-learning experience because you're clearly the only foreigner, so everyone in the car starts asking you questions and talking, and it forces you to repeat and repeat and repeat phrases you know and you learn new words. And then they lecture you on various aspects. And so in five hours at a crack I got a lot of language and also learned to relax about how to do border crossings in those days and kind of got into the rhythm of life and went to Damascus and stayed not in a Western-style hotel but in an Arab hostel, so everybody thought I was a crazy foreigner. But anyway, the hostel was very clean. It was run by the Red Crescent, the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross, and it was very simple and cheap, I think a dollar for bed and breakfast.

I should say a few things about Damascus. Damascus was still very much of the old Lawrence of Arabia city, or Crusader city. It was a very small walled town, basic town. It's where the small gate is which they call the "eye of the needle," which Jesus used in one of his proverbs, saying it's more difficult for a sinner to get to heaven than it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle. I remember in Sunday school wondering how a gate was the eye of a needle, but the gate - it's a very low gate - would be hard to get a camel through.

There's a big underground market there that still exists. If you ever go to Damascus don't miss it! Wonderful shops and everything possible for sale - and I mean everything. Incidentally, the people, everywhere I went, as soon as they heard that one had made the effort to learn Arabic, it changed the whole chemistry of how they dealt with you as an American. That was invariable. I haven't been in the Middle East now since the mid- '80s, but even now if I speak to someone in Arabic in one of the restaurants of Washington, it makes a complete difference in the way they view you as a human being, and that's a lesson we should remember.

We didn't talk a lot about politics in the *servis* taxis. We talked a lot about life. They were very curious about many basic things. Particularly, having seen a lot of American movies, they were very interested in personal relations between men and women, down to the very most basic details, and shared their own experiences with me. I went from Damascus to Amman, Jordan, and went as far south as the head of the Hejaz Railway, which is near Ma'an and Aqaba in Jordan, and then I went east to the Iraqi Border and then back to Amman, back to Damascus, back to Beirut.

Q: *Was Jordan at that time inundated by the Palestinians? I'm trying to think when was the Black September?*

CURRAN: I'll get to that. Jordan was my next assignment after Beirut, so I'll probably tell more than you want to know.

Q: *Oh, no.*

CURRAN: My family and I got around Beirut - because we couldn't get a diplomatic car - in an old Citroën I could afford, and we batted around the countryside in great style. Citroëns were wonderful automobiles, and again, Americans so rarely drove a car of that vintage and that appearance that it also eased many of the burdens of getting to know people. But my family still teases me. We were on a trip with some friends and we got lost, as is common in the Middle East. There are few sign markers. We were trying to get to Baalbek, something like that, where the old Roman ruins are, and there was an old lady selling drinks by the side of the road. So we stopped, and in my now, what I considered, fluent Arabic, I said, "Which way to Baalbek?" And without blinking, she said to me in Arabic, "I'm sorry but I don't speak foreign tongues." And I said, "Excuse me, but I'm speaking to you in Arabic." And she said, "I just told you, I don't speak foreign tongues." So I said something very emphatic with the word *God* in it, and I said, "I'm speaking to you in Arabic." "Oh," she said, "you speak Arabic!" (I was a blue-eyed foreigner and her preconception was they don't speak Arabic, so she didn't "understand' it.)

Q: *Yes, I've had conversations when I was in Yugoslavia where a man or somebody older would speak to me in German and I'd be speaking Serbian to them, and we'd go on in that regard because obviously I was not a Serb and the only other language they'd know was German.*

CURRAN: I want to talk a little bit more about Beirut as we kind of got into the scene and understood Arabic better. A lot of Americans we knew came to Beirut in the late 1960-61, a lot of Westerners, and they were just agog at what a wonderful city it was and how pleasant it was. And they would see AUB, the American University of Beirut, and they would see what was called Pigeon Rocks, which was where a lot of the foreigners lived and the Christian quarter, and Saint George's Hotel, bikinis, booze, and plenty of bigamy and all that stuff. But what they didn't see was the men, or they were called in Arabic "coolies," who did a lot of the work around. When we were moving in a refrigerator into our apartment, a brand new, big American refrigerator, I had no idea how they were going to get it up to the apartment. One of these "coolies" put it on his back and walked up five flights of stairs. And we ran into these men, and you could collect them on a street corner, pay them a dollar a day because they were desperately poor people; some of them were so dirty you could see the fleas jumping around between their neck and their clothes. At the same time you had people driving in air-conditioned Mercedes and living the high life. And then in between there were large populations of students who saw no future and spouted a lot of rhetoric about socialism. I once challenged one of these young men and said, you know, "I don't see how you, as a Muslim, can espouse a godless political philosophy." And he said, "Well, you don't understand. Socialism is the fastest way to an American standard of living." The other thing that was really extraordinary was the contempt that each of the divisions in Lebanon had for each other, including among the Christians the Armenians, the Muslims, etc. There were several different varieties of Christian. The Druze, the Muslims didn't care for each other. For them, their community was what was the critical thing, not the state, and as I say, when we get to the eruption of the Palestinian problem, the fact that we didn't, as a country, I think, understand the basic fault lines in Lebanon

cost us very dearly.

Q: *Did you notice that our embassy was sort of captured by one or two of these groups.*

CURRAN: Well, McClintock was totally beguiled by the Christian President, whose name I've forgotten now.

Q: *Was it Chamoun?*

CURRAN: Yes, it was Chamoun. Chamoun was the Maronite Christian leader.

McClintock felt that because he knew the Christian President, we could control the destiny of the country. And as long as it involved threats of force, we could, but when it came to the basic evolution of society, we had no idea what was going on, and I don't think we had sufficient force there to actually enforce our view.

Everybody runs into bargaining if you've been in the Middle East. I loved it and learned to love it, and it's a great pastime. It's not personal. You never get angry about it. You come to a shop and you try to make several visits - particularly if it's a valuable item - you try to understand how much the price is, and then you sit down, as we're sitting down and you begin to talk very elliptically, and eventually you come to a discussion of price, which on your part, since you're the owner of this invaluable piece, whatever it is, is very high, and since I've seen a hundred like it, my price is very low, and in a good natured way and over coffee we eventually arrive more or less at the right price. We spent a lot of time doing it, and my wife, who loves to shop, got very good at bargaining.

The other thing that was helpful in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East was that I learned a lot of Arab proverbs. And I found that to insert a proverb into an awkward moment - there are many of them that are very clever and quite cute; they're quite parallel to our own - would stop a problem in its tracks while they thought over what you had said. Or another device is to use a famous set of stories called "Hoja stories," which are quite common also in Turkey. "Hoja" or "Juha" is a bumpkin who makes his way around the world riding on a jackass and always brings wisdom to difficult situations. If you could quote proverbs or Hoja stories, you got a long way in your life.

So I would say, just looking back over Lebanon, it seemed like a struggle for us without embassy administrative support, and I think we overcame it pretty well despite the total disinterest of the embassy. We dealt with a brutal city, sensing underlying hostility but not really understanding it and being sort of sad that there was no real U.S. policy to deal with it.

Q: *Something I try to bring up every time I talk to somebody who has taken Arabic, particularly in the earlier years. One of the charges that's been levied against the American Foreign Service is that Arabic officers are somehow spokesmen for the Arab world and anti-Israeli. Can you comment on this about the people you were with and the officers you knew at that time, not in general, but I mean this specific group in, what, 1960?*

CURRAN: I was active in the area from '59 to '84.

Q: *Yes. Let's talk about this group 1959-61 or so.*

CURRAN: Right. Many of us, maybe most of us, came to the Middle East from the American idiom of looking at the Middle East, particularly feeling that Israel is modern and progressive and Arabs are backward and dirty. I think many people in our group were shocked suddenly to see that many Arabs are quite advanced and intelligent and that history has been unkind to the Arabs. I think it's correct, the book that was written - I can't remember the author - called *The Arabists*, recently.

Q: *Robert Kaplan.*

CURRAN: I think there's much that's fair in that. There were Arabic-speaking officers who got localitis in a big way, and I probably was guilty of it myself, particularly as a younger officer when I was living with Arabs in Jordan and talking with them in Saudi Arabia. You have wonderful, personable, hospitable people who look at you with tears in their eyes and say, "How could your country do this to us?" It's hard not to be sympathetic. In my own case - I spent probably six, seven years living and working with Arabs, maybe eight years - I began to see that it really is not one group's problem or the other but that it's really a problem both Arabs and Israelis have had. If you want to speak very generally, both have had great chances to resolve this problem and so far have unfailingly not met the challenge. But there's always hope.

Q: *I've heard the expression - this is earlier on, I don't know if it may be true today - two things you could count on: one was the Arabs to shoot themselves in the foot, and the Israelis to miss the trains.*

CURRAN: Well, in a more contemporary manner, it's the Israelis have been very fortunate in their enemies, and the Arabs have been very unfortunate in their allies. I think the total disillusionment of the Arab countries came in 1967, when they took all their carefully acquired Soviet equipment and threw it at the Israelis, and the Israelis took their carefully acquired American equipment and just wiped them out.

Q: *Mostly French at that time.*

CURRAN: No, the F-4 was available and flew rings around the MIGs. I guess the Mystères played a role, but by the way, the French, who had equipped the Syrians, did not fare, their equipment did not fair particularly well, because the Israelis took the Golan during that war, and in fact, the Syrians got out as fast as they could because they were afraid that the Israelis would go to the Biblical northern border of Israel, which was right on the gates of Damascus.

Q: *The officers that you were dealing with, particularly the younger officers, who were just getting into it during the early '60s and all, Arabists, was the motivation of getting in - I mean, this was a career move, rather than a ideological commitment or something. Could you comment on that?*

CURRAN: Well, certainly many of the great Mandarins of the Foreign Service in the '40s and '50s, Ray Hare and Rodger Davies, Pete Hart, and I'm trying to think who the great Under Secretary was of Administration in the '40s and '50s.

Q: *Loy Henderson.*

CURRAN: Loy Henderson. They were all people who were interested in the Middle East. Wally Barbour was another. They were all people to whom you could reach out. They were all great anecdote relaters and so it was a nice club to belong to. But that first wave of "giants" was heavily influenced by oil interests, not in the sense, obviously, that they got any money out of it, but they could see the strength of the U.S. strategic need for petroleum and the reserves, and they didn't think we were taking a balanced approach to the Middle East in view of the need they foresaw that we would have for oil. We didn't do a very good job as a country, and I'm sure you know the crunch point came when President Truman decided he would, probably for domestic political reasons, recognize Israel. George Marshall almost resigned.

Q: *It was 1948.*

CURRAN: Yes, the spring of '48. It's funny that in the aftermath of that, a big chunk of the Jewish vote in New York, where most of the Jews, I guess identifiable Jews, then went to Dewey rather than Truman. So that's politics.

I was taken out of language school "a little early," probably May or June of '61, because I was asked for by Ambassador Bill Macomber, who had been a special assistant to John Foster Dulles and had been sent to Jordan to be the ambassador in Amman. So I went, obviously, and the transition for us was day and night. First of all, the climate in Jordan is delightful, and we were taken back into the embassy administrative fold.

MORRIS DRAPER
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1959)

Morris Draper was born in California in 1928 and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1952. An Arabic language officer, Mr. Draper served in a number of Middle East posts including Beirut, Baghdad, Jeddah, Ankara, Jerusalem, and Washington, DC. Mr. Draper was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *After Baghdad, in 1959, you went to Arabic language training in Beirut. Was this at your request?*

DRAPER: Yes. I had shown an interest in long-term Arabic training before. This was one of the reasons I had been assigned to Baghdad -- to see whether I could survive in the Middle East. A lot of people changed their minds after serving a tour or two in the Middle East. So when my tour in Baghdad came to an end, I went to Lebanon both for language school and to attend certain classes at the University of Beirut in Arabic culture and history.

Q: How was the Arab training program?

DRAPER: It was both good and bad. A new director was assigned when I was half way through the course. He changed many of the exercise materials, for the better in my point of view. His changes greatly improved the training.

One of the problems is endemic to all language training. At some time during your training, you reach a certain plateau of competence; getting to the next one is very, very difficult. Beirut, as a locale for studying Arabic, was too competitive; there was more French spoken in Lebanese society than Arabic. English was also widely spoken. So it was not easy to immerse oneself in Arabic. The British tried to get around this problem by setting up their school in a little mountain village where Arabic would presumably be spoken all the time. In fact, over the years, the villagers became almost fluent in English. So Arabic training in Beirut was a problem. But on the whole, the training was good. It could not compare with the discipline exercised by our FSI instructors in Spanish or French training because Arab has more dialects and other vagaries, but the training nevertheless was reasonably good. The studies at The American University were excellent; they gave us a chance to explore other facets besides language. You can go stale just repeating language exercises for eighteen months.

Q: *What was your view and that of your fellow students of the Arab world at the turn of decade of the '60s?*

DRAPER: We were seeing the oil revolution which was changing the traditional societies almost overnight. While I was in Beirut, we had opportunities to travel around the area -- the travel was subsidized. This gave us an opportunity to broaden our knowledge. I saw the Gulf States for the first time. I saw Kuwait and what was going on with the transformation of a traditional society. There were a number of books being written at the time, tracing the changes in traditional societies in such countries as Turkey. Many of us saw the Arab world as promising ground for evolutionary change -- modernization -- while maintaining the best of their old traditions. We did of course note the occasional violence in that world. We detected underneath all the rhetoric certain sympathy, support and understanding for the United States. There were people who were very critical of our policies, but their view was not universal. In general we saw the Arab world as a promising environment to work in as Foreign Service officers.

Arabic is useful in something like twenty countries. Its roots are similar to Hebrew's, and Farsi and Turkish are also related, as well as Swahili in Africa. Later on, the Department began to assign some of the Arabic speaking officers, to Israel to study Hebrew. David Korn was one of the first of those officers and it became a regular practice; not only did the officer's breadth of view get expanded, but it also served by bridging the prejudice against the Arabists that some Israelis seemed to have.

Q: *What were our interests in Lebanon?*

DRAPER: We had sentimental interests, the University of Beirut; it was a sanctuary for the Palestinians, it was flashpoint that could explode between Israel and Syria and others into another major conflict in the Middle East. It was a source of great instability.

CHARLES E. MARTHINSEN
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1959-1961)

Ambassador Charles E. Marthinsen was born in Missouri in 1931. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Gannon College in 1953, he served in the United States Army from 1953-1955. His career has included positions in Dacca, Beirut, Jeddah, Damascus, Montreal, Cairo, Tripoli, and an ambassadorship to Qatar. Ambassador Marthinsen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in July 2003.

Q: What was Beirut like when you got there?

MARTHINSEN: Beirut was wonderful, incredible. I found out how right Kate had been. We loved it. We loved our experience in a very cosmopolitan city. Our sole problem was getting Lebanese to speak Arabic with us because they were so gifted linguistically. They could carry on a conversation in English or French or probably Turkish or Armenian at the drop of a hat, which we found exhilarating. It was a city where you could turn right and go for dinner a la francais or turn left and go for Arab cuisine in an Arabic milieu. It was wonderful. AUB was going great guns in those days. It was fairly enjoyable.

Q: How did you take to Arabic?

MARTHINSEN: I took to it rather well. I was helped, of course, by Kate's experience in Egypt. She would speak to me in Arabic and others would, too. Mastering differences in sounds took a lot of practice in front of a mirror. By the end of the course I could converse with people from most Arabic language countries pretty well, especially if they were educated. I could recognize the differences in accents. We say "Arabic," but there is a big difference between Beiruti Arabic and Mountain Arabic in Lebanon. It differs too from Damascus Arabic--which is just a couple of hours' drive away, which has an accent different from Aleppo, which is different in turn from that of Amman or Palestine. All are different from Najdi or Hejazi Arabic. Egyptian to a non-Arab sounds almost like a different language because of the different pronunciations and, often, vocabulary differences.

Q: Who were some of your fellow students?

MARTHINSEN: Dick Murphy and Morris Draper overlapped with us a year or so. Kent Whitehead. George Lane.

Q: How was Lebanon at the time? In '58, it had gone through an incipient civil war. We put troops in there for a while.

MARTHINSEN: It had become an amusing memory for most Beirutis. Many who recalled the landing were swimming that day at the beach. "What are all these ships doing here?" they asked. They directed the troops towards the Coke and ice cream vendors. Robert McClintock was the

ambassador and people still tell stories about his coming in with the troops with his poodle dog in tow. That excited much comment among Beirut. But they were otherwise tremendously relaxed about it. It was nothing like the bitterness that accompanied the violence in ’74.

Q: Did you get any feel for the influence of Nasser?

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes, his influence had extended throughout the Arab world. In those days, FSI sent its language and area trainees on an area orientation trip. Our trip included visits to Syria, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan. It was a truly wonderful experience.

Q: Where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: To all those places. We were on a military aircraft. The order was different. I think we started out in Turkey, but then we went to all those countries. It was a very rewarding experience that really introduced us to the region.

Q: One of the accusations that has been put forward is that State Department trained Arabists are ipso facto anti-Semitic and against Israel.

MARTHINSEN: That’s horse feathers. Arabs are Semites, too. I’m afraid that we are heavily prejudiced towards the Israelis as a nation and as a people and I think that the Israelis nurture that prejudice very, very, very successfully regardless of the cost not to the Israeli treasury, but to the U.S. Treasury. That has been probably the greatest disappointment in my professional life.

Q: Obviously it’s a major problem. But were you feeling any of that? What were you getting about Israel?

MARTHINSEN: We got from Department sources sort of praise, honor, and glory to the plucky Israeli democrats and all that business, whereas Zionists were busily establishing a theocratic state on the remains of the Indian reservations which were left to the Palestinian people. The Lebanese and others in the region had perhaps understandable sympathy for their mostly coreligionists in what was left of Palestine. The villains in the peace were the British. They and the French had diddled the Arab nationalists to a fare-thee-well in the wake of World War I and then proceeded not only to divide up the region into the states, which we pretty much know today, but also to promise the same land to British Zionists as they promised to the Arabs.

Q: The Balfour Declaration.

MARTHINSEN: That’s right. That’s turning a good trick: Give away to others what is not yours to give.

Q: Did one see that if you dealt in the Arab world, you couldn’t serve in Israel?

MARTHINSEN: No, because there were officers who did serve in both. If you were an Arabist or an Hebraist, you wanted to use your Arabic or Hebrew and so you wanted to be in an Arab country or in Israel. Of course, it wouldn’t be a big recommendation if you came straight from Tel Aviv to

Beirut or Damascus.

Q: What were you picking up from your fellow officers and others at the embassy about Egypt and Nasser? How did you see Nasserism at that point?

MARTHINSEN: Mostly as understandable. Much of the Western world, certainly London and Paris, were upset by the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the RCC revolution in Egypt. Very few people had much sympathy or understanding for Farouk and the fall of his dynasty. In my recollection, there was a similar amount of popular sympathy for the Mossadegh revolution, later crushed in Teheran. The monarchical system hadn't shown much in either country. I know that Nasser had a great rallying effect on Arab nationalists who wanted to change the status quo. But that is the story of all revolutions, as it was the story of our revolution.

Q: It was only 2 years after the overthrow of Faisal and Iraq. It was July 14th of '58. How was that looked upon, the emergence of the Baath Party and all that?

MARTHINSEN: That's a very interesting subject to discuss. Even as we speak, we're determined that we'd like to see a US sponsored regime emerge in Iraq that would be democratic. I've even heard the word "secular" used. Fat chance of running into a secular regime in the Middle East. But if that is desirable, then the Baath Party as it was originally construed, largely by Michel Aflaq, a Syrian Christian, and which sought to erect a wall of separation between mosque and state, was a positive development. I'm not sure we're following the right course in blaming everything on Baathism and the Baath Party. Saddam Hussein, like his Syrian counterparts, has over the years twisted Baathi doctrine to suit his own purposes. But there has always been a strain of secularism in the movement. Actually, until and unless that happens, the Middle East is going to be cursed... if you believe as I do that theocracies are a curse.

Q: I want to go back to 1960-1962. How did we look at Iraq? Were you getting anything?

MARTHINSEN: You mean '58 and the fall of the monarchy?

Q: I mean what happened thereafter.

MARTHINSEN: After a while, one grew accustomed to coups in Baghdad. I visited the city, which was quite an experience. Very disagreeable, very challenging climate to deal with. It seems to me that whether it was one of the Aref brothers or it was Abdul Karim Kassem or anyone else, it was more of the same.

Q: The rulers that Iraq ended up with seemed to be a pretty nasty lot.

MARTHINSEN: It's all very relative. Saddam Hussein was nothing to write home about: he has a singularly disagreeable character and is very cruel. But he shared that with many others, and not just Arabs, but other people who have less than high regard for their fellow citizens.

Q: As you were coming out of this language training, where were you thinking in the Arab world you wanted to concentrate?

MARTHINSEN: No. Having worked rather hard for two years, I just wanted to go to any Arab country to try to perfect my language. This was before I really appreciated the differences among the dialects. My first tour after training was in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. I thought, "This is very close to the heart of the Arab world and it should be very good." And it was very good. Jeddah in those days was a pretty sophisticated city with a variety of peoples, Muslims certainly, but from all parts of the Arab world. It was an interesting experience. And Saudi society was fascinating.

BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1959-1960)

Brooks Wrampelmeier was born in Ohio in 1934. He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1956. His career has included positions in Beirut, Amman, Jeddah, Lusaka, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Dhahran. Mr. Wrampelmeier was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.

Q: This would be what, 1959-60?

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes. I was given only one year because they said I had had three years of classical Arabic and didn't need any more. This may have been a mistake.

Q: In 1959 we had gone through the July 1958 overthrow in Baghdad, etc. Our troops had landed in Lebanon.

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, the troops had landed in Beirut in the summer of 1958. By the time I got there they were gone and Beirut was getting back more or less to normal although you still had the residue of the civil war. I remember one Lebanese politician who was unwise enough to drive up into the Druze area and was assassinated. We had an upholsterer do some work for us. He was very difficult to contact because he had been a Charmounist gunman and was hiding out. One had to call a number and leave a message and he might get back to you. It took us three months to get some chairs recovered and drapes made.

Q: When you talk about chairs recovered and curtains, that sounds like there was a wife involved.

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, let's go back. In 1957, when I was living near Dupont Circle, a young Foreign Service secretary was assigned to Sollenberger's office for training before going overseas. I tried to make a date with her. She wasn't interested but said, "Well, come along, I have somebody who lives in my boarding house and you can join us some evening at Scholl's cafeteria," which I did. Ann Dartsch was a first-year graduate student at SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies). She was rooming in a house which happened to be owned by FSO Dayton Mak's mother-in-law and adjoined the old SAIS building on Florida Avenue. Ann's father had been a career naval officer, serving primarily as a meteorologist. After the war he retired and settled in the Chicago area where he worked for the city as a civil engineer designing sewer systems. We used to joke that he got his mind out of the clouds and down into the gutter. Ann's mother's parents were

Polish-speaking Kashubs from Pomerania. They had settled in Winona, Minnesota, on the Mississippi River. Ann's mother trained as a pediatric nurse in Boston where she met her husband while he was studying meteorology at MIT. They married and Ann was their only child.

Unlike me, who had this very parochial Midwestern background, Ann grew up on naval air stations on both coasts and also in Panama before returning to Chicago for her high school years. She graduated from Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, in 1956 and was a student at SAIS in 1956-57. She also, incidentally, took her junior year abroad at St. Andrews University in Scotland. After attending SAIS for a year she got her appointment to the Foreign Service. While she was in SAIS we had dated a few times and when I went into the Army I left with her a bunch of books to keep during my absence. When I came back she was already in the Foreign Service and living in Arlington with an aunt and uncle. Her aunt's husband was FSO William Arthur Wieland.

Uncle Art's mother married a Cuban after his father's death and Art had grown up in Cuba. Joining the Foreign Service during World War II he served in Brazil (twice), Colombia, El Salvador, and Ecuador. At this time he headed the Office for Mexican, Central American and Caribbean Affairs in the Bureau of American Republics Affairs. He became controversial after he was accused by some Republican hardliners of having helped facilitate the 1959 Castro takeover in Cuba. Art spent several years sitting around the Department until the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee finally decided that he really wasn't a security threat. His last tour was as consul general in Melbourne, Australia, which he and Aunt Lee just loved, never having served outside of Latin America. They retired in 1968 to St. Mary's County, Maryland. They are both dead now.

Ann had completed the A100 course at which point I proposed and we agreed to be married. In the meantime, the Foreign Service had decided that they needed to help out the Passport Office, so after her A100 and French training, she was sent on temporary duty to Chicago, where she lived at home and worked in the Chicago passport office. She had to resign to be married. We were married in May, 1958, at the U.S. Naval Academy Chapel in Annapolis, her father's alma mater. In June 1959 we went to Beirut where we had our first child, our daughter Susan. After my year of Arabic we went to Amman, Jordan.

Q: I want to go back to the Arabic time. At the time you were going there there was the accusation often by friends of Israel that anybody who took Arabic was a red hot anti-Semitic practically. At the time, how did people treat Israel? You were getting ready for the Arab world and their weren't relations, there was a very sharp cut between them.

WRAMPELMEIER: I think there was a general feeling that if you were going to study Arabic it was not going to be in your career interests to serve in Israel. At the time, it was well known that Arab governments were very reluctant to allow anybody to work in their countries if he had served in Israel. The feeling was that if you served in Israel it would be very difficult to later serve in an Arab country. That attitude subsequently changed starting with FSOs like Gene Bovis who successfully served both in Israel and in Arab countries.

This reminds me of Robert Kaplan, who wrote The Arabists, and his assumption that so many of the State Department's Arabists were people with a background in the AUB missionary community This was not correct. There were a few, like Talcott Seelye, Bill Stoltzus, and the

Close brothers at CIA, who did come from an AUB or missionary background, but hardly any of my Arabic language classmates at FSI Beirut came from families with any links to the region.

Q: You know there weren't many. Sometimes it was a career move in the hopes of promotion which wasn't going to happen in Europe.

WRAMPELMEIER: In those days people did tend to become area specialists and never serve anywhere else. One thinks of the Latin American specialists and the Soviet specialists, etc. We certainly felt we were going to be the Middle East specialists. But most of the people in my group had nothing to do with the Middle East before they had come into the Foreign Service. Obviously we were living in an atmosphere where there was no love for Israel.

Q: Let's take Ed Wright.

WRAMPELMEIER: He was a very controversial character.

Q: Could you talk a bit about your impression because he was running this thing for a long time.

WRAMPELMEIER: Ed was very controversial. He was quirky. W did not have him lecture at FSI when I was there, but my wife had him lecture to her A100 course three days in a row on the history of the world. She said that at the end of the first day he had alienated all of the Jews in the course. The second day he offended all of the Catholics and by the end of the third day he had even turned off the Protestants. Ed was a very interesting character. His father had been a Presbyterian missionary in Tabriz, having gone there in the 1850s. His first wife, an American woman, had died, and he then married an Armenian woman by whom he had a couple of children. After his second wife was murdered by some fanatic, Ed's father returned to Oberlin College to do some more studies. There he married a third time. I think the third wife was Ed's mother. Ed was born in Iran. He became a Presbyterian minister and returned to Iran a couple of times. At some point, I guess in the late 1930s, Ed and the Presbyterian Church allegedly reached an agreement that Ed would not preach and the church would not try him for heresy.

During world War II Ed became a colonel, or something, in the OSS and was often in and out of Iran. He said that it had always produced a big joke because the Iranian border guards would say, "Ah, you were born in Iran, have you done your military service?" Then he got a job at FSI. He got himself in trouble with Israel's supporters because his views on Israel were pretty strong. When we went on this Middle East Summer Seminar to Jerusalem we had a session with then Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. Because Ed, as the leader of our group, was well known to the Israelis they had brought in a stenotypist to record everything. Ed asked the first question and said, "Mr. Prime Minister. we have been here in Israel several days and we have been reading and hearing a lot about this dispute about who is a Jew." (The issue was that an Israeli woman, who was not Jewish but had a Jewish husband, died but was refused burial in a Jewish cemetery.) Ben Gurion looked at Ed for about a half minute and finally said, laying on the accent, "Vat's da matter, don't you know vun ven you see vun?" This shut Ed right up. Ben Gurion then went on to try to give a politic answer to a clearly controversial question.

I would say that most of my classmates went into Arabic studies with a fairly neutral view of the

Arab-Israeli dispute. However, since most of us stayed within the Arabic-speaking area for most of our careers, we more than likely tended to lean a little bit towards the Arabs in the sense that we always felt somebody is going to have to make the case for our relationship with the Arabs because there were people in the United States who were opposed to closer U.S.-Arab ties.

Q: Correct me if I am wrong. You had in the British foreign service the Middle Eastern officers often going native. In my two and a half years in Dhahran to know them is not to love them. At least that was my experience in the Eastern Province. You can understand their point of view but this is a group that is not particularly appealing to Americans.

WRAMPELMEIER: We didn't have a bunch of people who wanted to go out camel riding like some of the British. Again, maybe this had something to do with the way we were being trained in Arabic. The British went up to the so-called "spy school" in Shemlan where they probably got somewhat more intensive exposure to Arabic. My exposure to Arabic in Beirut was pretty much like my first visit. You really didn't use your Arabic very much outside of the classroom unless you made a major effort. This was sort of a pattern of my assignments that I usually ended up in countries where so many of the people with whom I regularly dealt spoke better English than I spoke Arabic. It was difficult to engage anybody in a serious conversation in Arabic. So I never really attained the colloquial Arabic capability that I wish I had.

Q: While you were in Beirut, 1959-'60, was it a hot bed of Nasserism?

WRAMPELMEIER: There were lots of Nasserist groups as well as anti-Nasserist groups. It was sort of the high tide of Nasserism. One of the things that the Embassy did was to arrange for us to go around and have interviews with people like Pierre Jumayyil, head of the Phalange party which was a very anti-Nasserist movement; ex-President Camille Chamoun; and others who were in the anti-Nasser camp as well as talking to Ba'athists and to Druze chieftain Kamil Jumblatt. We got a variety of views from the Lebanese side of things. Nasserism was an issue, but for the moment, under Lebanese President Chehab, the situation was being kept under control and remained so until the '70s.

Q: Did the embassy call upon you at all?

WRAMPELMEIER: Not much. I served as weekend duty officer work once or twice during the year I was there. The Sixth Fleet came to town and we were expected to go with our wives and help out in the sort of USO the Embassy organized. But, other than that, no, we were not expected to do much. I think some of the older students there, those who had been in the school during the troubles of 1958, had been very actively involved in doing political officer-type work, much to the concern of the guy who was trying to run the language school while his students were constantly running off to play political officer. We really didn't have much working contact with people at the embassy although we were physically in the same building.

We did get involved in various things. I remember one of our USIS (United States Information Service) language students, the late George Thompson, started a little theater group that put on a couple of plays. I had a small part in *The Tender Trap.* That took us out of our studying mode. It brought us together with other people in the embassy and in the wider American community,

including the brother of Telly Savalas (a well-known TV star) who worked for USIS and took part in some of the theatrical offerings.

Beirut was a very nice place. My wife had never been to the Middle East and she found the first few days there quite trying. We were living in a hotel, but once we got into an apartment she began to like Beirut. And, of course, once we left Beirut, it was a nice place to go back to for rest and relaxation, shopping, or medical treatment.

The ambassador then was Robert McClintock. He was a character. At one point we were invited to come up to his office and read his 10 or 20 page dispatch on the events of June 1958 and his role in it. I remember most of his report reappeared almost word for word in the first several chapters of Charles Thayer's book, Diplomat. I don't remember if much was edited out, but obviously Thayer, who knew McClintock, had been given the same access to McClintock's report.

Q: McClintock was known for his poodle.

WRAMPELMEIER: That dog went everywhere. One famous incident that occurred some time after I had left Beirut, McClintock attended the Lebanese National Day parade with his dog. The dog got loose, leaped out of the stands, and stopped the parade. It was down there barking at the tanks and had to be rescued. The Lebanese press had a field day over that incident.

McClintock had a kawas, or dragoman, named Tewfik, a solidly built older Lebanese with magnificent upturned mustaches. Tewfik wore a traditional Lebanese Turkish-style costume of tarbush, baggy pants and shirt with a cummerbund and a highly embroidered jacket. I was told by somebody who worked in the General Services section that the vest alone cost something like $300. Tewfik would always ride in the front seat of the ambassador's car.

Q: He swam every day. I remember he jumped into the Persian Gulf when it was really very cold.

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, he and the poodle would be swimming off the coast of Beirut on what I would call a stormy day and there was Tewfik sitting there with a little towel folded over his arm waiting for the ambassador to come out of the water.

In September 1960 we left Beirut for Amman, Jordan, where I was to be the junior political officer.

Q: You were in Amman from 1960 to when?

EUGENE H. BIRD
Lebanese University and Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1961-1962)

Eugene H. Bird was born in Seattle, Washington in 1925. Mr. Bird graduated from the University of Washington and served in the U.S. Navy during WW II. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Jerusalem, Beirut, Dhahran, Cairo,

Bombay, New Delhi, and Jeddah. Mr. Bird was interviewed in 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

BIRD: 1961, I guess. I was assigned to the Embassy in Beirut.

Q: *How did you feel about what you'd learned?*

BIRD: Well, I got a 2+ [Limited Knowledge of the language] and was very close to getting a 3 [Useful Knowledge of the language] [after] the first year [at the FSI]. However, looking back on it, I think that there was a "fudge" factor in that grade. There was nothing very standardized about [the grades]. I felt that we would have been better students if we had spent a lot more time actually listening to radio broadcasts, reading newspapers, and trying to deal with [more "modern"] material, rather than the sort of materials they gave us. Some of the material was taken right out of newspapers, and I think that the vocabulary was fairly modern. However, we didn't have a useful English-Arabic dictionary, worthy of the name. We had an old Lebanese or Egyptian dictionary that was really terrible. It had 19th century type definitions. You couldn't rely on it at all. Arabic has changed a great deal in this century, even though it hasn't gone through the kind of reformation which the Turkish language has had. But Arabic has changed a great deal.

So I didn't feel all of that confident when I went into Beirut, although I found [my Arabic] useful, right from the beginning. We lived in a hotel for a time, and then I moved into the Embassy.

Q: *Were you single at the time?*

BIRD: No, I had a wife and three children. We went by boat on one of the "Four Aces" in the grand old style -- 21 days to Beirut. When we reached Beirut, I already had a few friends there. Dick Parker was there as Political Counselor. Harry Hollard was there. He was one of the "grand old men" from IO [Bureau of International Organization Affairs]. He was there as the UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Administration] representative and was almost an ambassador. So we were well received and were able to circulate around Beirut right away. In Beirut the great problem was that hardly anyone wanted to speak Arabic to us. [Laughter] You had to get outside of Beirut and into the villages before you could use Arabic very much. My children started into school: one to a French school and one to the International College, the international school. We got to know a lot of Lebanese [Arabic]. However, after about a month of studying Arabic in Beirut, I realized that the materials in use in the Arabic course out there were quite different from the materials in use in Washington. Frankly, I think that they were better, so I had a lot of "catching up" to do. Instead of being an "advanced" student, which is what I thought I was, I really wasn't that far ahead. I think that this proves that training language students in the area is probably better. I think that Beirut was the wrong place to have the training program.

Q: *It was too French and too cosmopolitan.*

BIRD: I asked for permission to take a class in Arabic history at the Lebanese National University. There were 11 people in the class: eight Tunisians, one Palestinian, one Syrian, and myself. I don't think that there were any Lebanese. It was on the history of the Arab world and was taught in Arabic. I struggled with that. I think that it was one of the best experiences I had. If I had anything

to lend to this discussion of how you should train people, I think that we should send them to the local university or to a community college.

Q: *Regarding 1961-62, what was the outlook? You had served in Jerusalem and you'd had contact with Israel. What outlook were you getting, particularly with regard to Israel and the Middle East situation? This is one of the things often brought up. The Arabists come in with a given mind set and so forth. Looking at the situation as objectively as you can, what did you think about it at this time?*

BIRD: Certainly, we traveled down to Israel during this year [of training in Beirut]. We went down twice and spent a couple of weeks there. We had friends in Israel, since we had served there. I had a little different viewpoint than, perhaps, some of the other Arabists. I had served on the desk [in Washington] and so on. I think that what you're getting at here is how much indoctrination were the Arabists getting in Beirut, having Arabic teaching there. It was a pretty cosmopolitan place. There were Jewish Lebanese that we met and talked with, and there was a chance to meet people coming out of Israel. I think we kept up pretty well.

On the other hand there was the drum beat of the Arab nationalists. Nasser was the big Arab nationalist at that time. [The Egyptians] had entered into an agreement with Syria to form the "United Arab Republic." I remember that one of our teachers was a Syrian. He was a big, heavy set guy who listened to Syrian radio broadcasts all the time, sometimes even during class. There was a civil insurrection in Syria at this time, and the Syrian Socialist Party came to power. When he heard the communique on Damascus Radio, saying briefly, "Take care of all of the Egyptian officers that you have. Do not kill them. We are going to ship them back to Cairo," [our teacher] yelled, picked up the radio, and kissed it -- right in class -- and then set it down again. I'll never forget that. We had some "real time" experience with Arab nationalist politics. We woke up one morning in our third floor apartment in the Embassy building that was blown up later on. I heard a lot of noise in the street, like that made by some kind of tracked vehicle. Sure enough, there was a tank out there. They'd had an unsuccessful coup d'etat during the night. The tank was running up and down the street in front of the Embassy. We had a lot of experiences of that kind in and around Beirut. We had the experience of going up and watching the harvesting of the marijuana crop and the poppies growing in the Bekaa Valley.

I remember going to the Lebanese Parliament at a time when they were having a very difficult debate going on. The Christians and the Shi'ites got into a terrible fistfight, right on the floor of Parliament, with four or five of us sitting in the gallery. They were quite embarrassed about it. They cleared the gallery. There was one big, fat guy who was pushing his way through, knocking people down and so on. You had a sense of how fractionalized Lebanon was, even at that period. It was similar to what would have happened if you had been in central Croatia during the turnover period after Tito [died]. The Lebanese couldn't agree on anything. So you got a fine, high sense of -- not so much cynicism about the Arab political world but a realization that they had a long way to go before they'd be able to call themselves "Christian" Arabs second and "Lebanese" Arabs first. They really didn't have a nation as such. It was a nation of tribes.

I used to talk with Dick Parker and others about that. We used to spend quite a bit of time, running around the Lebanese countryside.

As far as the attitude toward Israel was concerned, most of us felt at that point that there might have been a possibility of negotiating some kind of a "deal." After all, it was even possible for a diplomat to drive through to Ras Naqurah, the entrance to Israel. It took several weeks to get permission and so forth, but there were no "zones," no bombardments, no overflights by Israeli aircraft, and a pretty relaxed situation in many ways.

Similarly, in Damascus you could take a "sheerut" [collective taxicab] and go all the way to Jerusalem by car. It was very easy. We used to drive our car all the way down. We had very little trouble at the border -- maybe a delay of half an hour at each border.

Q: *I take it that from your experience -- please correct me if I'm wrong -- the way we were trained and the way we came in [to the Foreign Service] was not like the system which the British Foreign Service had. As a colonial power, they got out with the Bedouins and all that. Our people were thrown right into the metropolitan area. You saw all of the squabbling. There wasn't the romance [of the desert]*.

BIRD: No, not as much, that's true. We used AUB, of course.

Q: *American University of Beirut.*

BIRD: The American University of Beirut. It was right up the hill from us. We used the people there. We used to meet with "Zain Zain" and so on. Of course, I had been working for a couple of years by that time on a biography of George Antonius, a great Arab nationalist. I was over here at Georgetown University yesterday, and someone made a reference to George Antonius. Not too many people know who he is now. Katie [Antonius, George's widow] was resident in Beirut at this point. She had come up from Jerusalem and hadn't gone back to Cairo yet. So I interviewed her at some length about her life with George. In those days before World War II, of course, the Palestinian intelligentsia and upper classes went to Paris and down to Cairo, to Beirut and Damascus. It was all one easy country or area for them to work in. I think that it was, perhaps, a little like being in Central America in the old days, before things turned so nasty. The impetus for the Palestinian nationalist refusal to make peace with Israel was primarily from the intelligentsia, as a class. One of the things that we used to say was that the Christian Arabs were sometimes the most radical and "hardest" about accepting a logical pattern for making peace with Israel.

It is true that during our time in [Arabic] training [in Beirut] the subject of what to do about Israel and how to treat her as a "friend" of the United States -- we obviously had been responsible for her creation -- was always in the background of everything that we did. We were sometimes attacked publicly at cocktail parties and so on by Arab nationalists, although this was fairly rare. The Arab journalists would often ask provocative questions of people like us.Fritz Frauchiger was head of the program there. There were 20 of us or so in this 18 or 19 month program. Beirut was fascinating, but it was a terrible place to have a language school. The Lebanese, having been occupied by so many people over the centuries, were very cosmopolitan and had command of so many languages. When you went into virtually any store and perhaps found the salespeople talking Italian to a customer or Arabic among themselves, they sensed you were American and switched to speaking together in English. That didn't give you much chance to practice Arabic in your

day-to-day activities.

Some people were doing very well at learning Arabic. Generally most students had had a tour of duty in the Arab world, so the sounds of the language were familiar and they probably knew a little Arabic to begin with. For me, it was another world. The only word in Arabic that sounded the least bit familiar was "influenza," which is the same in both languages. I tried to learn the language but without much success. Some of my classmates weren't really doing much better, but they were toughing it out. I was concerned over the capability I would be likely to have at the end of the course and then have to work with it, particularly if I ended up in North Africa where you had a very different dialect.

About nine or ten months into the course I decided that Arabic really wasn't for me and without the language it would be foolish to specialize. I made that point to the deputy chief of mission of the embassy, Evan Wilson. Wilson was an old Arab world hand, but he didn't have a working use of Arabic. He couldn't understand how I felt that you had to have the language to understand the people. His unwillingness to acknowledge the point made me feel all the stronger that there was something lacking here and it was time to do something about it.

I informed the school and the Department that I thought it would be a wise investment to move me elsewhere, and nobody disagreed. My classmates were understanding and supportive of my decision. I stayed on a couple of months in Beirut helping out in the administrative section and then was transferred back to the Department.

One of my former classmates in the A-100 course, Chuck Grover, was finishing up being Portuguese Africa desk officer and the African Bureau was looking for a replacement. I got the job.

GEORGE B. HIGH
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1961-1962)

George B. High was born On July 25, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1953 and a law degree from Columbia University in 1956. Mr. High was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 26, 1993.

HIGH: Off we went to Lebanon to learn Arabic. Fritz Frauchiger was head of the program there. There were 20 of us or so in this 18 or 19 month program. Beirut was fascinating, but it was a terrible place to have a language school. The Lebanese, having been occupied by so many people over the centuries, were very cosmopolitan and had command of so many languages. When you went into virtually any store and perhaps found the salespeople talking Italian to a customer or

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DAVID A. KORN
Foreign Affairs Officer
Beirut (1961-1963)

Ambassador David A. Korn was born in Texas in 1930, and received degrees from University of Missouri and Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. After service in the U.S. Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1959. Ambassador Korn's career included positions in Beirut, Tangier, Nouakchott, Tel Aviv, Calcutta, and Washington, DC, and ambassadorships to Ethiopia and Togo. He was interviewed in 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *What was the situation in Beirut '61-'63?*

KORN: Those were really the very best years for Lebanon. The civil war of 1958 had passed and with the American intervention things had calmed down. General Chehab had been elected president. Lebanon had settled into a certain relative stability. There was, just after I arrived, a coup attempt by some extremists -- a group of pro-Syrian officers in the army. But Syria did not have a strong government at that time so it wasn't considered a major threat to independence. The major threat was considered to come from Egypt. Nasser's followers were very active and vocal and it was considered if anything happened, Egypt would move to bring Lebanon into the

Egyptian-Syrian union....

Q: *That was the UAR?*

KORN: The UAR was begun in 1958 and had collapsed just before I got there. In any case there was still a question as to whether it had collapsed really or whether it was going to be renewed. Egypt was the main actor there. But things were pretty quiet in Beirut.

Q: *At that time, looking at it, if somebody were to ask you "whither Lebanon?", how did you see things going there?*

KORN: Perhaps this reflects a certain hindsight, it is hard to say, but I think, as I recall, I had the feeling at the time, that this was a very fragile edifice and was just a conglomeration of essentially warring groups. And even though from '61 to '63, things were quiet and the place was prosperous, still it was clear that they didn't work together and that there was a great potential for the place to split apart. And of course that is what happened.

Q: *How did you find the training? I have heard some people saying that that particular school was not the greatest.*

KORN: It was terrible. The school was set up on a mistaken premise in the first place. The premise was that you had a school in Beirut, which was for Eastern spoken Arabic. You learned Lebanese Arabic which was a little different but basically the same as the Arabic spoken in Baghdad, Damascus or Saudi Arabia and different from Egyptian still.

RICHARD B. PARKER
Political Officer
Beirut (1961-1964)

Ambassador Richard B. Parker was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree in engineering from Kansas State University. Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1949, he served in the U.S. Army as an infantry officer. Ambassador Parker's career included positions in Australia, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and ambassadorships to Algeria, Lebanon, and Morocco. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: *Yes. Your next assignment was as a political officer to Lebanon.*

PARKER: Yes.

Q: *From 1961 to '64. What were you doing, and what was the situation there at that time?*

PARKER: Well, this was part of the Golden Age of Lebanon. Beirut was a wonderful place to be. Very open society. You got to know everybody. You spent most of your time trying to fend off

people who were trying to tell you things. The problem was never one of not enough information, but of too much information. We were trying to decide what was true and what was false and what was worth reporting. The Lebanese have always tended to take their politics too seriously. Something that is not shared by our people.

I had, again, two officers in the section. Myself and one other. I had a couple of other people attached to me. We had a geographic attaché and a U.N. Relief and Works Administration for Palestine Refugees attaché and the Dhahran liaison group, which was responsible for evacuation plans.

Q: *Evacuation plans, yes.*

PARKER: Had been moved to Beirut and that man was attached to my section. And I had a couple of local employees who did translating.

My job was to stay in touch with the politicians, the members of parliament, with people in general and find out what was going on which, as I say, was very easy. A lot of parties. A lot of late nights. Long lunches. Very hard on the liver. Three cocktail parties a night. Three cocktail parties and a dinner was sort of standard, five nights a week.

Q: *Well, I don't know if this is reflected of this, but I can honestly say at this point I can't remember whom I asked, but somebody who worked in Washington was also one of your Arabists who was in NEA at one point or another who said . . . I asked him about how he evaluated the reporting from the different posts. He said, "Well, they are mostly very sound except for Lebanon, of course."*

PARKER: That was Harry Symmes. I heard that. Harry's attitude unfortunately was typical of the Department in general and posts in the area. They didn't take Lebanon seriously. And I can understand why this would be the case. And I must say, in effect, to go from Lebanon to Egypt as I did makes you realize how petty Lebanese political concerns were. And it's true that we had a number of ambassadors in Lebanon who weren't particularly -- I would not put them in the category of particularly insightful in their reporting. Still, I like to think my reporting was good.

The only thing of any great moment was the upcoming presidential elections which people had been running for three years in advance and which took place in 1964. There is a great story there of American involvement in that process.

PARKER: Yes. In 1958, we had sent Robert Murphy out right after the Marines landed. He had sort of acted as the deus ex machina to facilitate the election of General Fuad Chehab, the army commander, as the president to succeed Camille Chamoun. Chehab, C-H-E-H-A-B, had been rather successful as president, although not as successful as a lot of people today think. There were many warts on him. The most important of which was that he was a minimalist. He didn't believe in really doing anything, but perhaps that's the best way to rule Lebanon.

There was a lot of jockeying for position among the various candidates, Maronite candidates. Every Maronite Christian in Lebanon, male, is a potential president. And they were all moving around and all trying to get the American endorsement which was considered to be very important.

You had to get the French endorsement and the American endorsement. The American was more important than the French. Everybody looking for signs that we favored this person or that person. It was rather tricky business.

Armin Meyer, the ambassador, got into trouble a couple of times because of innocent remarks that were taken out of context and misinterpreted. People were, on the one hand, very sensitive about the idea of American interference. And on the other hand, desperately anxious to have it. This resulted in a very interesting political ballet which we all danced around pretending one thing and looking the candidates over and not saying anything about them. But Armin Meyer has a very interesting story to tell about this, and I'll let him tell it on his tape.

Q: *He is being interviewed by one of our volunteers.*

PARKER: By Dayton Mak I believe. I hope he will tell the full story.

This was a very pleasant tour. It was a wonderful place to watch what was going on in the area. And I look back with considerable nostalgia on this as that really in many respects the nicest post we ever had.

G. NORMAN ANDERSON
Arabic Language Training/Political Officer
Beirut (1962-1966)

Ambassador G. Norman Anderson was born in Delaware in 1932. In addition to serving in Beirut, Ambassador Anderson held positions in Moscow, Sofia, Tunis, and an ambassadorship to Sudan. He was interviewed in 1996 by J.P. Moffat.

Q: *And this took most of two years in Washington to start the Arabic training?*

ANDERSON: Before I was assigned to Arabic I went to personnel, to the office that assigned people to language training. That was part of the deal; they got some work out of me before they sent me off to language training. But then I went to Beirut in 1961, early 1961, for Arabic. I just stayed on because the ambassador there, Armin Meyer, asked me to stay as his aide. So I stayed there for another three years, four and a half years all together, in Beirut.

Q: *Could you cite for us the situation in Beirut in that period between '62 and '66?*

ANDERSON: The situation was a bit unstable. When I arrived in Beirut for language training there had just be an attempted coup against the government. The PPS, which was a pan-Arab socialist group, had tried to overthrow the government. So there was a great deal of tension. The main event during my stay there was the presidential election, which took place in 1964. It was something of a landmark because it was the first time there had been a peaceful transition through an election. It came off quite well. Armin Meyer, the ambassador, worked very hard on that issue and I helped him out, so we felt a certain achievement there, after that election went very

peacefully and smoothly.

Q: *Remind us who won the election.*

ANDERSON: It was Charles Helou who came out as the new president. The president had been Fuad Chehab, who had been the commander of the Army. A lot of people thought he wanted to stay on for another term, but as things turned out he did step down, and then that made possible a peaceful transition.

Q: *Often junior officers have been used as a way to get to elements that more senior people may not want to be closely identified with, for one of a number of reasons. Were you used in any sort of capacity like that?*

ANDERSON: Yes, we in the Political Section of course tried to keep open contacts with some of the more radical elements in the country. For example, some of the Palestinian radicals and Shiite radicals and people of that sort were in my bailiwick, as well as the Egyptians, who at the time were quite hostile towards the United States.

Q: *Did you form long lasting attachments that lasted through the years, or was this a tumultuous period where you met someone and then didn't see them again?*

ANDERSON: Unfortunately I didn't see some of these people again. Many of them were killed during various periods of fighting in Lebanon. One of our friends became the PLO spokesman in the country. His name was Ghassan Kanafani. Unfortunately he was blown up in a car-bomb attack at one point. So, many of these people simply disappeared during either the fighting involving the Palestinians or through other unfortunate events.

Q: *And as you look back with the benefit of hindsight, do you feel that the embassy and you yourself were able to discern the trends that were going to lead the country to so much anguish in the years following?*

ANDERSON: I think we did recognize some of the problems just beneath the surface. There was a great deal of hostility between the Muslims and Christians, and the Shiite population in the south was especially unhappy. So the seeds of future clashes were there the whole time. There was quite a lot of feudalism in the country. Various patriarchs ran parts of the country and they had their own militias. So I think we saw the seeds of destruction. We were working to try to promote a more democratic society, but unfortunately the pressures on the country were just too great.

Q: *And do you believe that back in Washington this situation was recognized or were you lonely voices out in the field?*

ANDERSON: I think a lot of the problems of Lebanon came from the outside actually, even though there were internal stresses. For example, there was a great deal of pressure from Syria, Egypt, Palestinians, and Israel. From the southern part of the country, various attacks took place into Lebanon which were very disruptive. I went to Tel Aviv at one point and had talks at the Foreign Ministry as a very junior officer, and I pointed out at that point that the raids into Lebanon

were undermining the democratic situation there, but I don't think my voice carried much weight. Other serious pressures were from Palestinians coming into the country. There were already refugee camps and then later on more Palestinians came and set up their own more or less independent areas there. And at the same time some of the Muslim and Christian groups were setting up their own militias. So, all in all, the country became more and more divided.

WALTER M. MCCLELLAND
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1962-1964)

Consul General Walter M. McClelland was born in 1922 and raised in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In received a bachelor's degree from The University of Virginia, where he was in naval ROTC. He received his commission when he joined the U.S. Navy in 1944. Consul General McClelland attended Harvard University School of Law. His career included positions in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, England, Iraq, Kuwait, and Egypt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 20, 1995.

Q. So you were at Beirut at the Arabic language training school for how long?

MCCLELLAND: For about two years.

Q. This would be from '62 to '64?

MCCLELLAND: From January 1962 until February or March 1964.

Q. There has been a lot of controversy over who are the Arabists and all this. You were going to the heart of the training course. Could you describe how Arabic was taught during that period and what you felt about it?

MCCLELLAND: The course began with about six months of learning dialogues in phonetic Arabic, as a child would learn from hearing adults speak. After we had some familiarity with what the language sounded like and knew some vocabulary to help us in every day life, we started to work on Modern Written Arabic. This is primarily newspaper Arabic and vocabulary we could use in speaking about more complex subjects, such as politics and economics. We learned the alphabet and much more extensive vocabulary. The course used a set of really wonderful materials that incorporated new words along with previously-learned words to give the student a constant review of what had been studied before. We had both the written material and tapes of this material read in excellent Arabic so we could practice our pronunciation. We did little writing in Arabic -- mostly reading and speaking -- and the study of grammar was only incidental to the reading lessons.

The way we learned was in contrast to the system at the British Arabic School in Chemlin, a small, isolated town in the mountains outside Beirut. The British simply concentrated on the Classical Arabic, starting with alphabet, grammar, writing, reading and vocabulary; speaking colloquial

Arabic was left to after-hours recreation. The course was very demanding and intensive.

Some of us felt that our first months speaking colloquial were somewhat wasted -- we should have gotten into the basics of the language sooner. On the other hand, the British system had its drawbacks. Personally, I found Arabic very challenging no matter how you studied it. The words just didn't "stick" in my brain easily and sentences seldom came easily. We finally concluded that one could learn Arabic in spite of any particular system if one really wanted to. That is what we were all dedicated to doing. We also later concluded that two years is too short a time to learn Arabic, but much too long a time to study it intensively! All in all, I believe the course was a good one, and the Arabic I learned made it possible for me to function reasonably well in the various Arab countries to which I was assigned -- although the Arabic in each one was clearly different from the others.

Q. Did you get any feel for our policy towards Israel while you were dealing with this? This has always been the great controversy, many saying that the Arabists are too pro-Arab and anti-Israel. On the other hand, they say that the people who deal with Israel get too caught up in that and that we have other interests. Was there any of this ferment among the people who were with you at that time studying?

MCCLELLAND: During language study in Beirut, I was so centered on studying that I did not really have time to get into a critique of our policy toward Israel. But I did get a definite feel about what the Arabs thought about U.S. policy toward the Middle East when I was in Dhahran. Officers at the post were subject to almost daily criticism of U.S. policy, saying that the U.S. was strongly pro-Israel and that Jewish interests ran the U.S. Government. I tried to deny this, saying that we were even-handed, but I did not convince many people. When I came into the area I certainly had no pre-conceived notions in favor of either the Arabs or Israel. I had not really been involved in this part of the world.

I went on to serve in several other Arab posts and guess I came to feel that the Arabs were their own worst enemy. Their refusal to be reasonable on the subject of Israel made them come out the loser time after time. On the other hand, I believe they had a legitimate case for many of their grievances, but no one was giving them a break -- not us and surely not Israel. I believe they were treated badly by us and by Israel and that our policy was blatantly favorable to Israel -- this is simply a political reality that they didn't want to accept. Arabists in the State Department tended to know the background about what really happened when Israel was established and how its terrorist gangs beat many Arabs out of their lands and scared off others. I think they were more sympathetic toward the injustices done to the Arabs and wanted to be more even-handed. No Arabist that I knew thought that the Arabs were paragons and deserved our full support -- but being even-handed can seem pro-Arab in the context of the time.

Q. Was the time when you were in Lebanon, 1962-1964, a fairly quiet period? There had been times when Lebanon was difficult.

MCCLELLAND: Yes, it was reasonably quiet when we were in Beirut. There had been an attempted coup just before we arrived so there were soldiers all around town who checked your ID at various places. But generally, things were about normal with all the restaurants, hotels, clubs,

and schools open and lots of foreigners all over town.

Q. Did you get to take any trips?

MCCLELLAND: Yes, we took a couple of great trips. At this point in our lives we had five children: Three boys 14, 11, and 4; and twin girls two years old. One Christmas we took the two older boys and visited Arab Jerusalem for a week. We stayed at the Anglican Cathedral and visited all the places we could without passing over into Israeli Jerusalem (we didn't want to get our passports stamped since we were living in Beirut.) We had a wonderful time. One summer I and another Boy Scout leader took a group of 16 American Scouts (including my two older sons) to Greece to the World Boy Scout Jamboree on the plains of Marathon. We took an old Greek transport ship that stopped at Alexandria, Egypt and the Island of Rhodes on the way. We stayed at a YMCA camp near Athens, visited the Jamboree for a day or so, toured Greece by bus, and returned to Beirut. We all survived and it was an unforgettable experience for all of us!

Q. Was it June of 1963 when you went to the Jamboree?

MCCLELLAND: I think that is right.

Q. I was in Yugoslavia, at the other end, and I remember Boy Scouts were coming through to the Jamboree just as we were having a horrible earthquake in Skopje. I was down there and we grabbed some British Boy Scouts to help us do some stuff. The British Council did this.

MCCLELLAND: I am sure that was the same time. Scouts came from some 75 countries. Our group was not representing Lebanon, we were just unofficial visitors -- but I think we had a better time than some of the official visitors did!

Q. When it was time to leave Lebanon, did you have any preferences of where you wanted to go, or were you pretty much assigned.

MCCLELLAND: I do not remember what post I requested, but I assumed I would be sent to some Arabic-speaking country. Just as I was completing my Arabic training Embassy Baghdad requested the Department to send an officer for the Economic Section urgently. Accordingly, without asking me or Ambassador Meyer, about it, I was ordered to go to Baghdad on direct transfer without any home leave.

Q. Ambassador Armin Meyer?

MCCLELLAND: Yes. He was Ambassador in Beirut, and the FSI language school was under his overall direction. I explained to Ambassador Meyer that we had had two years in Saudi Arabia, direct transfer to Beirut, and two more grueling years at FSI, and we had five children who needed to visit the US now and then to see our families. We really needed a break. He kindly put our case to the Department.

HUME HORAN
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1963-1964)

Ambassador Hume A. Horan was born on August 13th 1934 in the District of Columbia. Horan served in the US Army from 1954-1956 and graduated from Harvard University in 1958. In 1960, Horan entered the Foreign Service. Ambassador Hume's overseas career includes posts in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan and as Ambassador in Saudi Arabia. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy 2000 – 2001.

Q: So you started Arabic when in Beirut?

HORAN: I began in late February, 1963. I was at the FSI Field school until June of 1964. The environment was totally motivating. I don't think I ever worked as hard and as focusedly on anything before or after. a great Director, Ray Chambers, drove us hard. He told us that he expected us - apart from our classtimes - to spend at least three full hours a night on homework, especially on the constant repetition of our canned dialogues. Evenings, I would sit in my living room, while the alarm clock ticked away, and would loudly repeat to the apartment walls the dialogues of that day. After those three hours, I began translating a well-known Arabic novel. It was slow work, but I said to myself, "I want to do some real Arabic." The next year, my translation was published by Khayat's, a well-known Beirut publishing company.

Q: Let's remember things. Obviously the Six Day war was on then, but let's start in the first place, what was the connection with the embassy or much of a connection at that point?

HORAN: The nice thing was we were housed by the Embassy, had access to all of its conveniences and privileges, but had really no responsibilities except to push on with Arabic. Very few official functions. For Washington's birthday, I remember, Ambassador and Mrs. Meyer would invite the advanced students up to the Residence at Yarze to help out with the guests. They were both very nice to the students. They could be tougher on the Embassy's senior officers.

Q: You seem to have enjoyed Beirut.

HORAN: It was an unexcelled cultural experience. To be given 14 months, at full pay, to steep yourself in the language and history of an area as rich as the Levant! Beirut itself was fascinating - the mixture of Arabic and French. I traveled a lot. We'd go on picnics in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, often travel to Baalbek and Damascus, visit Krak des Chevaliers and Palmyra. The romance of history and culture was all around you! The world of Maurice Barres's Un Jardin sur l'Oronte! I also traveled to Jordan - saw Petra, and of course went to Jerusalem! In those days you went down to the Jordan and crossed the King Hussain/Allenby Bridge to the Israeli-controlled West Bank. I'll never forget my first view of that wonderful and terrible city, silhouetted again the setting sun, as we drove up from the Dead Sea. Everywhere I went I had a chance to try out a couple of little phrases of Arabic. You know, people really responded so well. It gave you the sort of feedback, encouragement you needed to go back to your room and the alarm clock.

Q: One of the problems with Arabic I have been told by others who have taken it is dialect because there are a number of dialects, and sometimes they thought their teachers were forcing them into using, getting a little too classical. How did you find it there?

HORAN: I could see the bodies on the various strands of barbed wire framing this issue. I thought well, I am not going to be one of them. One hardy perennial was whether it was better to approach contemporary Arabic via a classical door - like the British Center for Middle Eastern Arabic Studies (M.E.C.A.S.) in Shemlan, or via an immersion in colloquial Lebanese. In the British case, students were eventually expected to expand their Classical range downward; at the FSI, we were expected eventually to raise our colloquial Arabic upward. Our scientific linguists were not FSOs. They wanted us to follow the "scientific linguist" approach, i.e. heavy at first on Lebanese colloquial. I had my own thought, which was that colloquial Lebanese is not going to do me a lot of good as I travel around the Arab world meeting with government officials. Linguistically correct colloquial Lebanese, only raised eyebrows in most Arab Foreign Ministries. Roger Davies was once reproached by a Syrian official for speaking his "best" Lebanese. The Syrian told Roger: "Officials do not speak to one another that way. Your dialect is like what I speak to my driver or gardener in." Anyway, to myself, I said, if the colloquial approach is the company line, I will do that. I will not fight that problem. But through my studies on the side, I steadily improved on my fair base of classical. And as soon as I left Lebanon, I got rid of colloquial Arabic substantially, and ended up - after some years - speaking what the Arabs call, "al-Lugha at-thaalitha." That is, "The Third Language." It is not colloquial, but it is not really classical either. Real classical could be like you and me speaking Beowulf. What I spoke is sort of Restoration English. If you speak this variety of Arabic, everybody can understand you anywhere in the Arab world. Depending on their education, they can respond the same way.

The other perennial, popular among Arabs, and which I always avoided discussing, "Which country speaks the purest Arabic, that Arabic closest to the Koran." In that direction, I believed, lay madness and broken friendships. In reality, I believe they are all about equidistant from a Koranic starting point, except for spoken Moroccan - which seems almost a blend of Arabic and Berber.

Two more: is it is best to begin at the Classical or colloquial end of things? Avoid that ant-lion pit. Students should just be told to work really, really hard, and maintain some enthusiasm, some intellectual curiosity, about where their studies may lead them. E.W. Lane learned in a cave near the Pyramids, while studying with a tutor from a mammoth Classical dictionary. But again, you just have to sweat. Any system will work. None is easy. Success or failure depends on the student. I got results: an S4/R4 plus when I graduated from the school, which I raised to a 4 plus/4 plus after my next tour in Libya.

Finally, students must try to become sufficiently fluent in Arabic that they can insist on its use, as against the English of their interlocutors. a slight difference in fluency can be decisive: if your Arabic is approximately as good as your interlocutors' English, you'll use it more, and it will improve. If it is not - you'll just use it with taxi drivers and waiters, and in the end, maybe not even with them. Subduction! Tectonics!

Note: It is important for an Arabist to work in Arabic, not English. In English you are not speaking

to your interlocutor. He is speaking to *you* in English. Meanwhile, "he" remains one dimension behind the scenes, in his native Arabic. He is playing on your 10 yard line. You should try to play on his end of the field. A relationship established and developed in Arabic gets you significantly closer to the real person, to the facts of the case. In English, your contacts are, so to speak, going through an interpreter - themselves.

Q: One of the charges that has come down through the time, It has sort of died out now. I think it may have been Israeli sponsored, any Arabist was ipso facto anti Israeli. Did you sense any of this in your class?

HORAN: I would find it one of the weirdest kinds of accusations. I sometimes said to people: "You know, we go to the Arab world and look at the record, Colonel McGinnis is hung by the PLO, Curt Moore and Cleo Noel get assassinated, Our Embassy in Beirut gets blown up - twice, the Marines suffer 250 casualties, our defense attaché in Amman, Bob Perry is assassinated. Meanwhile every Arab editorial is pouring venom and vitriol over the United States." To those that see Arabists as "soft" on Arabs, I ask, "What do they think we are? a bunch of idiot masochists? Begging to be blown up again? All this pain and vituperation is supposed to make us pro-Arab? I mean give me a break!" To our critics, I'd say, "We are professionals. We are like oncologists. You don't like cancer but you deal with cancer. You don't like Arab radicalism, but it is there and you have got to deal with it. You don't call your doctor a cancer-lover when he has to bring you the bad news." If anything, an Arabist's experience in the Middle East should tend to make him pro-Israeli. You'd drive through Syria and Jordan and then cross into Israel. It would seem a weight had been taken off of one's chest. It was hard not to, because for all of the messy inconsistencies of Israel's democracy...it was the most democratic state by far in Africa or the Middle East!

Pro-Arab? The phrase might apply a little to British Orientalists. After a youth spent in these awful public schools, they go to an Arab society and can feel right at home: NO WOMEN. But lots of falcons and camels! Give me air! I respect the British tradition. I especially respect the great Victorians, just extraordinary human beings. But we are not Victorians. Our FSI class was just a group of young Americans, just out of military service, and looking at the area afresh. Our optic, if we had one, was strategic. There were those - of Loy Henderson's generation and just after - who even saw our close ties to Israel as a strategic disadvantage. It helped give the Russians entree into a very important part of the world. Henderson felt, that Israel was something of a bone sort of stuck in the throat of what otherwise would have been a continuing good relationship between the United States and the Arabs. The Arabs had no particular beef with the United States prior to 1948. We were their favorite Western power. The King-Crane commission, that was sent out by Woodrow Wilson to determine the will of the people in the pre-mandated Middle East, recommended Syrian independence.

I personally disagree, though, with those who say that but for Israel all would be well between us and the Arabs. The problems between some Arabs and the U.S. (and by extension with Israel), is that the decrepit and corrupt traditions of Arab politics cannot endure the contrast with the open, democratic, dynamic society of the U.S. - 5000 miles away. Much less, that with the reproachfully powerful state established by the despised Jews along the Eastern Mediterranean. Israel inverts a proper world order, promised to Muslims by Mohammed...one that seemed for centuries to stand

the test of time. The Huntington thesis *does* have some validity when applied to the contending aspirations of Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

On the other hand, "has Israel always been a plus for U.S. policy in the Middle East?" I find it hard to make that argument. Israel is surely a more attractive state in many ways than its neighbors - except for Jordan. You just breathed more freely when you got into the more-or-less democratic atmosphere of Israel. You felt closer to home. What would *realpolitik* say, though? That point is moot. Israel exists. We support Israel. That is our policy. As loyal Americans, we have no difficulty in supporting that policy. The policy is made by the President. We get to put our views forward. We should do that. But when the decision has been made, we work to make it succeed. An FSO is something of a lawyer for the U.S. side. You take your brief as given you. As a "lawyer" for Uncle Sam, you give your client your full support. Are our clients 100% right in every instance? Maybe not, but right or wrong, they're our clients, and we have a duty to do our best for them.

Q: Did you find yourself always responding in whatever contacts you were having both in Baghdad and in Beirut to the question, "Why did the United States recognize Israel right away?"

HORAN: It would come at you, again and again. You just put your mind in neutral and your tongue would come out with the usual antiphons. You know, I never was tempted to beat my breast, a la, "I am sorry, a great wrong, but..." Sometimes, even I was so bold as to ask back, "What are some of the really nice things the Arabs have done for us? Or for their fellow Palestinians, for that matter?" I was never pro-Arab, or anti- Arab. *But through Arabic, I was able enough to appreciate the good aspects of Arab civilization - so that the tawdry present did not sour me toward my hosts.* I suppose in a somewhat vague way, I could be considered pro-Israeli. I was fascinated by my study of Weingreen's Classical Hebrew. The relationships with Arabic are dramatically evident. But like most Arabists, I saw myself as being only pro-American. "My country right or wrong...but always my country." Does that sound too melodramatic?

Q: How were things Palestinian-wise in Lebanon while you were there?

HORAN: Not very active. The big push in Lebanon for the Palestinians came after the Jordanian civil war - yet to come. I was political chief in Amman during Black September (1970). There is something amusing about Arab expressions of support for the Palestinians. The Arabs are so hypocritical. "I love Palestinians..." Then comes the subscript: "But not in my neighborhood...and they'd better not ask for citizenship or work papers, or try to get out of their camps. Hell will freeze over first."

Q: Did you, I mean were you aware of how Lebanese society broke down at this particular time?

HORAN: Yes. The Christian Maronites held the Presidency, the Sunnis, the Prime Ministership, and the Shi`a, the Speakership of the House. Shiites outnumbered both other groups put together, but the Shi`a were also the most economically and politically downtrodden. In the '60s, speaking of the Lebanese political system, people would exclaim, "Amazing isn't it? How well this very fragile coalition manages to survive. The Lebanese have a genius for accommodation!" Well, the system did have elements of flexibility. But these were finally exceeded after 1975, when several hundred thousand radical Palestinians, fresh from Jordan's Civil War, were added to Lebanon's

ethnic mix.

Q: Well then, how many other students were taking Arabic at the time you were there?

HORAN: There were probably about 10-15 students at the language school.

Q: How would you characterize them?

HORAN: a couple were good. I think especially of Norman Anderson who came after me. He was very good. Mostly, we were good hard working journeymen - some could have had more sparkle. a little more intellectual curiosity about where they found themselves.

Especially deplorable was the FSI's practice of keeping students in training long after it was clear they would never crack the code. These students became bitter - toward themselves and especially toward the Arabs. If a student had very little ability, the FSI's approach seemed to be to keep the poor person's bloody nose to the grindstone for another three months. After awhile, some of these students - before they even got to their first Arab posts - already were very jaundiced against the Arabs, their language, and their culture. How could they not be? Their studies had inflicted such a blow to the self-esteem of officers who in other ways might be very competent.

Equally reprehensible, was the FSI's tendency to yank out really promising students as soon as they had reached S3/R3. "Good enough for government work" seemed to be the position. a foolish position, certainly. I believe that an S4/R is worth multiples of S3/R3s. Something like a capital ship being that much more effective than a lot of escort craft. Jim Akins, did very well in Arabic. In less than a year he was at the 3/3 level. To himself he said, "I'm headed for a 4-4." Then they yanked him out. In Kuwait, where he went, he got his Arabic to that level - but he felt he had not been supported by our system.

I got to a 3/3 after six months. I thought this is my one chance to really make some progress in Arabic. So when murmurs about possible transfers came up, I scotched them. I'd been assigned for a year, and wanted to get all those benefits. I struggled and kicked and managed to stay until the spring of '64. We didn't have many alpha pluses such as Dick Parker or David Korn.

Q: Also were these pretty much career officers, I mean working on a career, or were they with sort of an agenda?

HORAN: No, they were all, they were all career people, either for State or for USIS.

Q: Were you getting much in the way of information you and your colleagues about Arab civilization and all that?

HORAN: We had lecturers that came down from the AUB. We were encouraged to do readings on our own and I found that really very interesting. These readings led me beyond what I had been doing in grad school. History was always my hobby and avocation. It helped you look at developments and people who did not react the way you thought they should. History helped you understand and even deal with these people, even when they were hostile or self-destructive. So, I

did a fair amount of reading in Islamic civilization. It was both a pleasure and a necessity. Classical Arabic offers many rewards. But if you never cross its literary threshold, if you see and hear only the meretricious public outpourings of Arab press and radio, you would end up by having a big tummy ache with regards to the Arabs. It's as if you were a foreigner, living in New York City, and getting all your news about the U.S. from the New York Post or the Daily News or supermarket tabloids. You'd think, "These Americans, they're all sex fiends, drug addicts or insane!

Arabists should cultivate a professional view. They should study Arab politics and society in depth. What they learn from such a deeper study of a great civilization, can help them deal in a more balanced way with a very untidy, violent, sometimes irrational present.

Q: Yes, one of the things I think has always been a negative for relations with the United States as far as Americans see the Arab world is their exaggeration. There are two things you can count on, that is the Arabs will shoot themselves in the foot and the Israelis will miss the train as far as something could be done. I don't know if that is still true or not. Did you have to almost steel yourselves to discount the adjectives in the Arab world or not?

HORAN: There was something awe inspiring about the rank negativism of Arab political discourse. You could see them at the beginning of the article, taxiing composedly down the runway, but a paragraph or two later they would give their motors full throttle. RRRRRRRR! Driven by the high-octane of 1500 years of Arabic rhymed prose and poetry, in no time they'd be at 10,000 feet. But they might not know how to fly the plane!

It is an etymological fact, that in Arabic saying something tends to make you and others think it is so. Arabic a very oral culture. The language can carry its speakers and listeners off to a world of instant gratification. "We are all right. They are all wrong." Arabic can impede the methodical dissection and analysis of issues - such as we do in English. The reason is partly linguistic and etymological. Arabic operates on the totality of a person's intellectual and auditory systems. Each word is emotive to a degree that no word in English can be. In English, words are usually divorced from their historical and etymological contexts. An English word may have an origin in a language other than English. Maybe from French and in turn from Latin, and in further turn from Greek. Even farther back may lie some Indo-European root. But among us English speakers, who knows? Who cares? The background and the history and the weight of the word is all filtered out for us. It stand alone - unless we are scholars or etymologists.

This is not the case with Arabic. Arabic words can operate on Arabs not just at the intellectual level but right down into the hypothalamus. In Arabic there are few of these etymological linguists crossovers from a series of languages, ending in Arabic. Arabic is resistant to loan words. For a concept you may have a word, but that word is based on the fundamental sense of a parent tri-literal root. And when the word is used, many related forms and concepts, also derived in a regular pattern from the triliteral root, crowd in. They all demand a hearing. When you are speaking contemporary Arabic, at your elbow, whispering in your ear, are thousands of years of Semitic - layer upon glittering layer. Their cumulative emotive, historical drift can carry the speaker away. The baroque, crystalline structure of Arabic, the lacework of higher forms of the verb, of participles and gerunds all derived from of the root form, can act on the mind like strong drink. Before you know it, you start talking rhymed prose Blah, blah, blah. It is as easy as pie to

talk rhymed prose in Arabic. In fact, if you don't tighten your seat belt, you can end off somewhere up in the stratosphere. “My God, what did I say. I didn't really mean to say that! The language just came over me!”

It is interesting to consider why Hebrew - which is as close to Arabic as French is to Spanish - work so differently on the endocrine system. The difference may lie in the long hiatus between the end of spoken Hebrew - replaced by Aramaic even in Roman times, and Hebrew’s renaissance in the past hundred years. I always regret not having gone beyond Weingreen’s Classical Hebrew Grammar.

Q: In your class and other people you talked to about where when you are getting ready to go, was there sort of an understood pecking order where the best places to go and all?

HORAN: Good question. I can't really say that was the case. Cairo? Maybe Damascus - the true heart of Arabism. I always wanted to serve in Syria - they speak the best Arabic anywhere - but it never worked out. I don’t think, though, I even applied to any particular places. In those days personnel mostly told you where to go. So I was assigned to Aden. I liked the idea. It sounded very radical, the Hadramaut, dramatic. Then well into my preparation for Aden, I got assigned to Baida, Libya. I thought Baida, Libya! I’d been assigned to a place in the Arab world which I, an Arabist, had never even heard of! It almost got worse. I wrote my “Happy to join your Team,” letter to Ambassador E. Alan Lightner. At the last minute my good angel jogged me memory. Was Libya spelled “Lybia” or “Libya?” The dictionary helped, and I wrote a new letter.

DAYTON S. MAK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Beirut (1964-1969)

Dayton S. Mak was born in South Dakota in 1917. He received a bachelor’s degree from the University Arizona and a master’s degree from George Washington University. After serving in the U.S. Army during WW II, Mr. Mak joined the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in Hamburg, Dhahran, Jeddah, Libya, London, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Washington, DC. Mr. Mak was interviewed in 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *Well, Dayton, I'd like to move on then. You left there in '63, and you went to the Naval War College where you spent a year, and we won't go into that, because we'll move to your last overseas assignment. That was as deputy chief of mission in Beirut from 1964 to '69. How did that assignment come about?*

MAK: Golly. I guess it came about having -- well, being available and having two slots open in Beirut. I guess they just figured that here's a body and there's a vacancy. Both the economic slot and the political slot were going to be open. Dick Parker was going to be transferred somewhere -- I've forgotten where -- and the economic slot was open. So I guess that's how.

Q: *But you went as deputy chief of mission?*

MAK: No. I went out as economic officer. When I arrived, Ambassador Meyer --

Q: *This is Armin Meyer.*

MAK: Ambassador Armin Meyer said, "Look, you can have your choice. You can be head of the political section or you can be head of the economic section." I felt, well, I've being doing economic work mainly in Kuwait -- or it was a mixture in Kuwait. I thought, well, why not flip a coin. And it came up political.

Q: *Economic, you mean?*

MAK: Political. No, I decided to take the political section. So that's what I was, chief of the Embassy's political section.

Q: *I might mention I assume at this point -- we're talking about 1964 -- that Beirut was considered a marvelous assignment.*

MAK: Oh, it was. Yes. It was never quite what they would call the Paris of the Middle East. It might have been Paris of the Middle East, but it wasn't much like Paris. But it was delightful, yes. It was a wonderful place.

Q: *We're speaking now of 1989, and it's considered sort of hell on earth as far as a war-torn place. We have a minuscule representation.*

MAK: It was a delightful place then. A hell-hole now.

Q: *The ambassador was Armin Meyer for part of the time you were there.*

MAK: Yes, he was there. Well, anyone who wants to read about what really went on in Lebanon my first couple of years should read his tapes.

Q: *In fact, you just interviewed him as part of our collection.*

You became deputy chief. When did that happen?

MAK: After the '67 War.

Q: *Armin Meyer has been an ambassador in a number of places, including Japan. What was his operating style?*

MAK: Armin had been initially a newspaper correspondent, as I remember.

That was, I think, briefly. He was mainly in the USIS, and then his tremendous capabilities were recognized and he was brought in the Department as DCM in Afghanistan where he really ran the

embassy, and then later on he served in the Department as deputy assistant secretary. He was a man of obvious terrific capabilities. He worked primarily in the Middle East -- probably entirely in the Middle East up until then -- and that's why he was chosen as ambassador.

Q: *How did he use the embassy? How did he use you?*

MAK: I got waylaid, didn't I? He had served in Beirut before as political officer and chargé d'Affaires. He knew everybody; he really did. He knew Lebanon like very few Lebanese know it. He really was keen on this. So, as a result, he pretty much ran his own embassy. He knew what should be reported. He knew what was going on. He knew whom to see. He knew what should be done. Each morning he would immediately begin typing out reports of events to be reported, which, of course, left me with not much to do. So when something would happen that I knew about and I presumed that Armin knew about it too I would rush into the embassy before he got to his typewriter and had it all typed out, and on his desk by the time he got to his typewriter. I really would frantically try to get things into him before he got to them. He didn't read French, which I did, so I could also read the newspaper and get a little bit up on him from that point of view. But Armin could have run that embassy without any help. [Laughter] A stenographer was all he needed. His antenna was formidable, so accurate. He knew everything going on.

Q: *What were our concerns there at that time?*

MAK: Well, I guess our main concern at the time was the presidential elections that were coming up in Lebanon. Now, this is a silly thing to be concerned about, but it was. The various forces of Lebanon were trying to battle out who was going to be president. It tended to be a contest between the pro-Nasserites and anti-Nasserites, almost the pro-West and the anti-West. It was sort of like that. But it really wasn't of all that much concern to us, but the parties concerned made it so.

Q: *One found oneself sucked into these politics, which, of course, at that time had not turned septic as they have now.*

MAK: Well, it was a peculiar situation, and actually it was pretty unimportant from the standpoint of our viewpoint in the world. Our interests really were never in jeopardy whichever side won, so it was really a matter of just watching.

Q: *Was there ever a feeling, looking at this thing objectively, that really Lebanon should have been a part of Syria? I mean, it made more sense than this really post-World War I creation, or not?*

MAK: That's really a tough one. The Lebanese really didn't want to part of Syria. Now, it's certain that some Lebanese would not be unhappy to be a part of Syria, but Syria had gone through revolution after revolution, government after government after government, and to attach itself to a jumping jack like that didn't really make much sense. The Lebanese are, above all, merchants. I mean, that's not just the Christians or the top Muslims, they're all basically merchants. They've done it for centuries. They know how to get along, and they really don't much want anyone telling them what to do.

Q: *When one talks about the Levant, that's the Levant.*

MAK: Yes, that's basically it. They're the Levantines.

There was another thing that interested us -- two things, really -- I think of a major interest to us. One was the Arab-Israel matter. The Israelis were trying to get more water out of the rivers that flowed through Lebanon and Jordan than the riparian states thought they were entitled to. Lebanon, and of course Jordan, would prefer that they didn't get a drop of their water that originated in the Arab land.

Various schemes were devised by the Israelis to divert water for their own use, and the Arabs, the Lebanese, concocted their schemes to keep them from doing it, like building diversionary canals and the whole thing. We had to keep on top of that.

This also was the beginning of the Palestinian forces movement into South Lebanon to use the south as a launching point of attacks against Israel. This was a matter of constant concern to the Lebanese, who then sought our help in placating the Israelis. Trying to keep the Israelis and the Lebanese from fighting one another, over actions of the Palestinians was a problem.

Q: *What were you doing? I mean, you at the embassy and you personally*.

There was still a considerable settling of Palestinians in southern Lebanon at that time?
MAK: Fatah was organized and became important during that time, and PFLOP. All those splinter groups of Fatah, and Arafat himself, became known, and they started setting up camp in the south. I thought I invented the word "Fatahland," but I gather other people have invented it, too, so we all invented it.

Q: *What was the embassy doing and what were you doing as far as the problem of the Palestinians moving in and setting up these things?*

MAK: The problems, as I remember, were often about border problems with the Israelis. generally it concerned suspicions that the Palestinians were up to something on the border. The Lebanese were scared to death that the Israelis would invade Lebanon if the Palestinians launched attacks across the border. After a series of such Palestinian "forays," I can remember the Foreign Ministers asking me if we knew about Israeli intentions to attack them. Just like that. I think they wanted us to pass on to the Israelis word that they did not want any trouble. Anything that happened, they were not a party of. I believe I was Chargé at the time and was asked to call on the Foreign Minister in that capacity.

Q: *Because there was no Lebanese representation in Israel, of course.*

MAK: That's right.

Q: *Well, did you pass this word on to our embassy?*

MAK: I passed it to Washington.

Q: *How were relations between our embassy in Lebanon and our embassy Tel Aviv? Were there mutual consultations?*

MAK: No, we didn't have any. Every once in a while they would send an officer over to discuss matters, but we had no direct liaison.

Q: *What happened during the '67 War? This was the very successful war of the Israelis in which they basically took over the whole Sinai and the Golan Heights and all of the West Bank, too, wasn't it?*

MAK: Yes.

Q: *And Jerusalem.*

MAK: Well, there was a great deal of tension before the war erupted. Nasser was making all sorts of threats against Israel. I'm not saying they weren't justified, I'm just saying that he was making all these threats about invading Israel and knocking out Israel for this reason and that reason. Jordan was sort of in between. They were terribly nervous about Israeli intentions, and suddenly the thing exploded, with the Israelis making a preemptive attack on Egypt, which was totally successful. However, as I remember, the King of Jordan saw some planes, thought they were ours, and protested to the American Embassy and to the world that Americans had joined in the battle against the Arab world.

At the same time, King Hussein decided that Nasser was winning so Jordanian troops attacked Israel. Foolishly, of course, but they attacked Israel. The Lebanese press then absolutely blew this all out of proportion, and the United States was suddenly one of the villains largely because of King Hussein's mistake about the Israeli planes.

Q: *Then how did this impact on you?*

MAK: Well, as a result, we started evacuating people from Egypt and from Israel and, I think, from Jordan; and our dependents and non-essential U.S. Government personnel were evacuated from Beirut.

Q: *These are basically dependents and --*

MAK: Dependents and nonessential personnel, yes, and our ambassador was asked to leave. The Lebanese were completely ambivalent in this thing. The Muslims were almost entirely anti-American. They started storming the embassy, throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at the chancery building. The crowds swooped down the corniche to the embassy.

Q: *The Corniche being the main road along the coast.*

MAK: Along the coast, leading to the embassy and past where we lived and past the American University of Beirut, beating up our cars parked along there, and then finally being stopped by tanks of the Lebanese Army.

There was a blackout in Lebanon, and our dependents were evacuated at night through the AUB campus and bussed to the airport. From then on, we who remained were under guard all the time going to and from the embassy. It was all sort of silly, but we felt in a pretty much war-like mood. We didn't know which way things were going. Then Nasser was whipped very speedily, in six days, I think, and he resigned as president of Egypt.

Q: *It was a six-day war.*

MAK: Yes. Nasser resigned, and that brought out the crowds again surging through the streets, smashing western and "Christian" signs and windows and gunning for the American embassy. It was a very tense period. Everything was shut down in Beirut. And then Nasser decided to withdraw his resignation, and then there were more demonstrations. So it was really sort of hectic. It really was a pretty hectic period.

I remember during that time our dependents were all gone, and the city was dead, just dead. No planes were coming in, no boats going by, no traffic, just tanks around the embassy, and we felt very sorry for ourselves. I had a call then from a friend of mine in the Lebanese foreign office, Jean Riachi, I remember, Jean said, "Dayton, how about going to the beach today?"

I said, "What?"

He said, "Sure. Come on, I'll pick you up." So he picked me up at noon in his expensive Italian vehicle. I can't even remember the name of it, it was so expensive. We went down to the beach, and there were the Lebanese having a marvelous time. They were all on the beach playing beach ball, volleyball, and all the girls in their bikinis lying around, everyone eating and drinking.

I thought, "Boy, this really shows you how your mind can get the better of you." From then on I thought, "The hell with it. I'll go where I want to go in Beirut." Up until then I really felt that I was practically in jail. But in a few weeks the dependents came home, and everything went along just as though nothing had happened, except, of course, from then the Palestinian problem got worse.

Q: *And we were reporting on it, seeing it, but there wasn't --*

MAK: That's when we were reporting daily on what the Palestinians were doing and saying what the Lebanese were thinking about, what the foreign office was doing about it, and what they could possibly do to maintain their own position in this country.

Q: *There's been, of course, a prohibition for many years, which has just been lifted with them this year to a limited extent, of dealing with the People's Palestinian Liberation Organization or anything to do with them. You're an Arabic speaker, you're a political officer, you have a lot of Palestinians and a lot of things that were happening and there was just beginning really to turn into a major element within Lebanon. Did you have any contact at all with people who would be considered Palestinian leaders?*

MAK: I don't remember having contact with any of them, no. Our contacts would be largely with

Lebanese who were their spokesmen, who were their allies. And there were many of them, both in the press and politics. But, no. They didn't seek us out, and we didn't seek them out.

Q: *Was there a prohibition?*

MAK: No.

Q: *Was the feeling that this was a no-no, or there just wasn't any point in trying to talk to them?*

MAK: Well, at that point they really hadn't become a force in Lebanon politics. They were an extraneous element and they weren't terribly important. Obviously, history shows that they were growing in importance, but there were no prohibitions against them. They just weren't an element at the time.

Q: *Well, did you go down into southern Lebanon and travel around and see what was happening down there?*

MAK: Oh, yes, we would. We'd go down there fairly often. It was always a little dicey, because even when I was there in '68, '69, the Shiites were not happy with us at all. I remember going to one reception given by a local sheik down there, and it was obvious that we were Americans. The American ambassador, Dwight Porter, was there. Someone had strewn nails and tacks so our police escort jeeps got flat tires, and there would sometimes be people lining the roads throwing little stones at our convoy as we passed.

It wasn't a major problem, but it was a growing problem. It was not terribly pleasant going down there. But we continued to call on the major sheiks there. A couple of times I called on -- and one time with the ambassador, another time alone -- on Sheik Musa Sadr, head of the Shiite religious element, I believe in Tyre, the fellow who went to Libya and was never heard of since. He was the leading Shiite in the country at the time. I remember accompanying the Ambassador on a visit to Musa Sadr in his home -- really a weird, weird character -- and calling on the Druze leader down there, Sheik Majid Arslan, and all the local dignitaries.

Q: *Well, when you call on them, what did this mean? When you call on the Shiite leader, was there any meaningful conversation?*

MAK: Well, not very meaningful, no. They would know in advance -- this would all be arranged in advance -- that we would be coming, and we would either have lunch or tea, and the conversation would always, if there was anything substantive, be about one of two things -- who's going to be president, if there was going to be a presidential election, or the Palestinian problem in its many aspects.

These people were always interested in the water diversion schemes because they were right in their back yard. They were always interested in what the Israelis are doing and when the United States was going to stop supporting Israel and help the Palestinians get back their country.

Q: *We were talking about the atmosphere in Lebanon concerning spies. I wonder if you could talk*

a little about the atmosphere in Lebanon concerning spies from your experience.

MAK: Well, the gathering of intelligence, both by the people we didn't want gathering intelligence and our own, was really one of our prime considerations. Beirut was loaded with such people, official and unofficial.

Q: *Free lance and this? [Chuckles]*

MAK: Yes. Practically everyone you would meet -- correspondents or business people or parliamentarians, anyone -- was in the market as buyer or seller of intelligence of any kind. It didn't really matter which side they were on or you were on, nearly everything could be sold for a price. You had to really live with that in mind. Everything you said, everything you did, you realized would get back to somebody, probably for a price.

Generally it didn't matter because the things that we were doing in Beirut were of little importance to the rest of the world. They were probably important to a certain segment of us and our immediate neighbors, but to not much else. But anyway, the Russians were terribly active in trying to bug our embassy, and succeeding, at least once to my knowledge. And they tried to subvert personnel in the embassy, by buying their services. It was a little bit like that cartoon in Mad magazine, "Spy vs. Spy," and probably was just about as productive.

Q: *It shows people blowing each other up, and in each one there are traps and countertraps and counter-countertraps, and that sort of thing.*

MAK: Right. There were so many funny things. Someone would throw a stick of dynamite at the embassy. No one ever really knew why or who did it, they just did strange things. The Soviets would try to embarrass us by making up a forged letter, a letter ostensibly from the U.S. ambassador Meyer to the Secretary of State saying we ought to support such-and-such candidate and get rid of so-and-so, demonstrating that the U.S. was interfering in the Lebanese presidential elections. The letter contained obvious errors in choice of words or errors in grammar presumably to let us know that they knew that we knew that they had done it, but the Lebanese wouldn't be convinced of this. I mean, it was sort of cutsie. It did a little bit of damage, but mainly it was just part of the scene.

Q: *Well, I have to ask, did they ever use any of the bikini-clad young ladies down on the beach for this sort of thing?*

MAK: Well, I'm sure they did.

Q: *I spent 30 years in the diplomatic service and kept waiting, with no luck. [Chuckles]*

MAK: No. We had a number of people try to do it, but they were not bikini-clad. One was red-headed Olga. It was peculiar. She had been a Soviet spy, but she fell in love with somebody on the other side a Canadian, I believe, and defected. We had to keep her under wraps for a long time and finally smuggled her out on an airplane. Luckily, Pan Am went through Beirut. But no bikini-clads. Everybody wanted to come in and give us information.

Q: *How about the press corps? Again, when I was in Saudi Arabia, I had the impression, and I got this from my colleagues, that you had almost all Middle East problems, which was boiling at the time, were reported on by a bunch of reporters that did nothing but sit at the bar at the St. Georges Hotel and listen to stories and swap stories and then report as though they were on the scene somewhere. How did you find the press corps -- the American, but also the international press corps -- on its reporting, and how did you deal with them?*

MAK: Well, we didn't have all that many Americans stationed in Beirut that I remember, and they were all darn good. The one I remember best was Joe Alec Morris, who was absolutely topnotch. You know, I'm afraid it's my memory that's bad, really. The New York Times fellow, I think he's now with the Washington Post, (Jim Hoagland, I think it was). And Dana Adams Schmidt was there, and Dana was good. They didn't sit at the bar of the St. Georges really, although they would, sure, and they'd talk to people, but they would talk to us, they would talk to all elements.

Beirut was a good place to gather intelligence about the countries in the area, because in most of the countries, they weren't allowed to, and the local Beirut press was very open. It wasn't necessarily accurate, but it was very, very open. Beirut had a lot of newspapers reporting everything that went on everywhere and a lot of things that didn't go on. But for an intelligent fellow like Joe Alec Morris or Dana Adams Schmidt or these others, they could sift through it and get pretty much accurate stuff, and they would check it with us. We were open with them, because there really wasn't much to be secretive about in Beirut that was in our real national interest.

Q: *Well, speaking of national interest, one of the remarks that is prevalent is that American interests abroad are mainly economic. In Lebanon, did we have any major economic interests that were driving us, can you think of?*

MAK: I would think our major interest in Lebanon from an economic standpoint would be the fact that two pipelines ended up in --

Q: *It was called tap line.*

MAK: Well, tap line in the south and another one up in the north.

Q: *That was the one from Iraq.*

MAK: Yes, from Iraq and came out near Tripoli. And keeping those open was important, but that primarily was not a matter of Lebanese concern. It was a matter of what happened in Syria and Jordan and in Israel. As for Lebanon, we had interests there. It was an entrepot for the rest of the country -- I mean, for the rest of the Levant and for Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, even Syria to a certain extent. It was an excellent place for American companies (particularly banks) who had operations throughout the Middle East to have their headquarters. The climate was good, communications excellent, and the government and society receptive to their unhindered operations.

But our trade with Lebanon was peanuts compared to other countries. They wanted us to buy their

apples, which is about the only thing we -- well, we didn't need that. And we were not a major supplier to Lebanon. No, I'd say Beirut was primarily a listening post and sort of a good place to meet representatives of the other countries on a friendly and more agreeable soil.

CHESTER H. OPAL
Information Officer, USIS
Beirut (1964-1966)

Chester H. Opal was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1919 and graduated from the University of Chicago. He joined the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in Warsaw, Poland; Rome and Naples, Italy, Mexico City, Mexico; Vienna, Austria; Saigon, Vietnam, Beirut, Lebanon, and Washington, DC. Mr. Opal was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.

OPAL: It was in the spring of 1964 that I was reassigned. Before I left, Tom Sorensen, who had served as an information officer in Beirut, told me it was his favorite post, and suggested I sort of keep my eye on the area, as a sort of an area officer, and report back. I decided this was just sop being thrown at me, and I never did report back on regional affairs.

One of the things that I did that was off the beaten track in Beirut was to use our press service for distributing refashioned items of news that we got from American airplane manufacturers like Douglas and Boeing, in order to convey both the technical advancements in American aviation and info on the products of American aviation. I wrote back asking approval for this, and there was no disapproval ever voiced by the Agency. I felt that promoting American products was a legitimate enterprise of ours if we didn't overdo it and didn't get ourselves involved in sponsoring products, but where, overseas, sale of aircraft, for example, is important to our exchange of balances.

At any rate, in the early seventies, Arthur Hoffman, who was then associate director of the Agency and had served as my regional officer in EUR, and with whom I discussed this commercial reporting, wrote an Agency instruction calling for just this sort of thing on a more extensive basis. It is part of the Agency charter now, so far as I know. This is just something that struck me in Beirut because of the nature of the post and the highly commercialized kind of thinking that went on in Beirut.

Except for a language center which we had, which was the most effective, I don't think the other parts of our program were of any special real significance. The English-language center taught English, which Lebanese were interested in for commercial and not cultural reasons. (French was <u>their</u> culture!) We had the Kennedy Youth Center, the library, which was later attacked, of course.

Our press section was apportioned along sectarian lines. We had an Armenian, a Druze, and a Greek Orthodox on the press staff, who served the different sectarian organs in this primarily sectarianly powered community. The community was governed by the sects who had blocs of seats in the Parliament and special seats in the government. For example, a Sunni Muslim had to be prime minister, a Maronite Catholic had to be president, the general of the Army had to be a

Christian, the foreign minister had to be Greek Orthodox, and so on. All of this was distributed around under a system whereby the feeling of participation in government and in society as a whole could be felt by all members of these sects.

It was a very good thing until 1967, when it broke down with the Israeli War and then, later, with the Sunnis and the Shias beginning to fight each other on the Muslim side. What it did, finally, was bring out the fact that the country had now become primarily Muslim, and the old distribution of power according to an assumedly Christianly dominated Lebanon no longer held. When the French left in 1943, the census was taken and showed that 50-some percent were Christian, and the rest were Muslim. After all these years, there was never a new census, and the Muslims, of course, have outgrown the Christian population.

The press, on the whole, was distributed also in a sectarian way. You had organs of the various sects. We had over 30 daily newspapers in Beirut. My best friend in the press was Kamel Mrowa, who, oddly enough, was a Shia, but was more Western oriented. He published an English and an Arabic daily newspaper, and I got a fellowship for him for an editors' seminar at Columbia University. When he came back, he found that he had had a useful experience. He was a very prominent man, both in the Shia community and among the press generally. At any rate, not long after he came back, because I guess we became identified, Nasser sent a couple of assassins to knock him off, and he was assassinated in his office. One of the killers was caught and put in prison, but never tried because he was considered political. The other one fled to the Egyptian Embassy and under Nasser's protection, was spirited out of the country. After that, there was a considerable amount of self-censorship that operated among the press generally because of Nasser's tactics. He was anti-U.S. at the time.

We knew -- at least I did -- all the heads of the various groups, because they all had their own armies and all had their own politics. It was necessary to know them. (I sat down to dinner once with every one of these heads of assassin armies -- the chiefs of the Druze, the Falange, the Muslims in Tripoli, Lebanon, and so forth, and it was weird to think of those murderers politely breaking bread together.) We had an exchange program, of course. We had the center, where we had exhibits and books. We had a library also in Zahlah, over in the Bekaa Valley, which I thought useless and turned over to the local populace. The press operation wasn't any kind of press publication as such, but there was press output. The influence that we exercised was minuscule, if any. I don't think the Arab press said anything but what the Arabs felt was wise to express vis à vis the American Government and American policy, which they felt was identified too closely with Israel. The French press was expressive of the old French imperialists' interests. There was a general feeling that what we stood for, the Americans, as such, had no meaning to them because of their primarily Arab and area interests. Therefore, we really didn't make much of an impression upon them. Yet privately, in the kind of materials that they doctored themselves, in which they depended upon us to have to doctor, they were basically friendly. This is particularly true of the Christian community, which was grateful to us for our military intervention in 1958, when we brought the Marines in and stabilized the condition there after the revolt in Iraq, when Nuri Pasha fell and Kassim came in.

So while we felt strong undercurrents of friendship, not only among the Christians, but among some of the Muslims too, it couldn't really express itself. I would try to impress upon editors or

writers that I met, "If you express some sympathy for U.S. Government, let's say you have no interest in Vietnam, but if you can understand and show some support for us and our Vietnam policy or our Far East policy, we might be inclined to show some interest in what you stand for." This somehow had never occurred to them. In fact, as I recounted earlier, I was attacked once as a so-called "foreign visitor" by a newspaperman for suggesting this line to him. He recanted a couple of days later and became a great friend of the United States. I've told of this earlier, but it was sad, because they didn't look beyond themselves. For all their ability to deal, to negotiate, and so on, they never saw that they would not compromise themselves by assuming, on our behalf, a favorable posture on problems that were of importance to us, but not necessarily to them, because they would lose nothing from espousing these positions. They could gain something in exchange from us, because we tended to favor parties espousing views of that sort.

On the whole, however, I felt that I was wasted in Beirut. The area became less and less strange to me, of course, because I read everything in the world that I could find, and even passed it to my ambassador, who welcomed any kind of enlightenment -- he confessed to equal ignorance. It was, nevertheless, of such a limited and such an impotent kind of operation, essentially, that I felt somewhat stymied. Certainly it was not anything that inspired any great effort on my part. While we worked, as we all do, it was nevertheless, I felt, a kind of come-down for me.

* * * * *

Q: *There also was a Regional Production Center in Beirut. Did you have any connection with that, or any occasion to use their products? If so, how did you rate them in terms of the Manila operation?*

OPAL: When I came there, there was no regional operation as such. We had a book-translation program and a book-translation officer who operated, oddly enough, out of Egypt. There was some translation production in Beirut, but there was no film production. We had no regional film production. We had the Voice of America regional radio officer, who prepared a daily telegram which became the basis of a text of policy for Voice Arabic broadcasts, and that was done out of Beirut. But he might go to Egypt, as well. The Voice cable, as such, always originated in my office. I never had any problems discussing this with the VOA man: his understanding of the Arab world was just fine. We had Telly Savalas' brother as one of these people. They were fine types who knew the area, but as a production center, as such, I wouldn't say we had anything like that in Beirut, and nothing like the one in Manila or Mexico, later.

Q: *It never reached that size, but they were producing an Arabic-language magazine out of that center*.

OPAL: Yes, this was run by Dick Barnsley. It was a vast printing plant. But none of it originated locally. They were independent of our local USIS, and took their orders, so to speak, from the other posts in the area by way of Washington, because I think everything was done there. Yes, this was a very sophisticated printing plant for a magazine and other types of publications. But the origins of it were never there, and I had nothing to do with that in the way of guidance or anything

else. This was outside my purview. It was a fine show, and it was not of the size of Manila.

Q: *I think Manila is a prime example. It always was the really big center, and it had its own editorial staff and everything else. I think you're right, probably, that the Beirut operation really didn't do a great deal of originating any material; they just reproduced what was sent to them by European posts and the Near Eastern posts. I know that they did operate.*

OPAL: Yes, like Ameryka, which went to Poland and for which I wrote an article, by the way, after I left government. Those publications were done really in Washington. The post didn't do them. Whereas the ones that we produced at the regional center in Manila were products of the post. My people decided on the article, with materials from Washington, materials that we ourselves developed, and then it was printed in Manila. But this is not what happened in Beirut. In that sense it was quite different.

When I was in Beirut in 1966, we had a PAO conference under Director Leonard Marks. We had a PAO from Israel there and people from the Arab countries, and it was interesting. I suppose this is the way the Arabs and the Israelis are divided, too. There was a good feeling. We knew what we were about, and none of us voiced any prejudice, although Arabists, as such, are supposed to be prejudiced for the Arabs. I never detected it there.

As a consequence of that meeting, I spent a week in Israel later as a VIP visitor. The foreign office worked out a very elaborate trip for me. I enjoyed it, and I got a lot out of it. While I was there, I might say, an emissary came from Leonard Marks' office and asked how I felt about returning to Vietnam with a ministerial rank, replacing Barry Zorthian in the public affairs sector. Barry, I guess, was due to be transferred.

By this time, I had had a spinal condition diagnosed, and I had a pinched nerve. I thought that under medication I could probably survive for two years without too much tension, but I did not know what the long-range health consequences would be. So I said no. I was rather depressed about having to say no, because it would have been fascinating to go back at this stage in early 1966.

When I came back to Beirut, I told Dwight Porter, who was my ambassador, that I was going to resign and leave government because I could not perform at full power. Since there were things that they wanted me for that I didn't feel I was up to, I couldn't perform at the level I wanted, and I shouldn't stay in government. I just wasn't feeling well enough.

He said, "Why don't you put in for medical disability?" This hadn't occurred to me. So I did it. I put in my papers, including reports from the medical offices at the American University of Beirut, my X-rays and so on, and sent them to Washington. The approval came back so fast that I was convinced I was dying. (Laughs)

At any rate, I was asked to stay on until September, when my replacement could come. I did. I sent a cable thanking the Agency for educating me during my second adolescence, and I left government. I was 48 years old.

Q: *Who was your replacement in Beirut?*

OPAL: Ed Savage.

Q: *I thought it might have been Jack Hedges, because he was there as PAO when I left Thailand in 1970 and came through Beirut.*

OPAL: Ed Savage. I understand that he and Adrian Middleton were disasters. Both were disasters. Adrian Middleton was the DCM who came back to Washington and was killed, unfortunately, on the Virginia highways. I will not talk about Adrian, poor soul. Nobody thought much of him, including Dwight Porter. But he was trying hard.

Savage came in. We had an overlap of a couple of days. I had known him when he was information officer under Rowan in Finland, and he was scheduled to go to the Army War College, I think, and he wanted to be appointed PAO when Lew Mattison left. I refused to appoint him. I said, "Go on with your college. You'll always appreciate this." I found somebody else for Mattison. Well, apparently Savage didn't forgive me for that. When he came to Beirut, he was really a cold fish. Then I understand there were all kinds of staff problems under him; I received all sorts of letters, asking for help, but I was out of government and couldn't interfere. What happened to him eventually, I don't know, exactly. It was a personal disaster, which is unfortunate, except that Beirut post was of a kind where disasters could probably be absorbed very easily, without doing any kind of great disservice to the U.S. Government.

It's increasingly become so, because the local situation there is so mixed up, there's so much confusion, so much hate, so much terror, so much blood. There's very little we can do to affect anything, except to keep our presence there, keep up the hopes of people who hope that some day there will be something in that country that's worth preserving, and to the degree that we intend to stay and that we have an interest, we gain, but nothing else really remains for us. This is probably what I felt was my only mission there when I was there. It's a minor one.

DAVID HAMILTON SHINN
Rotation Officer
Beirut (1964-1966)

David Hamilton Shinn was born in Washington in 1940. He received three degrees from George Washington University. During his career he had positions in Kenya, Washington D.C., Tanzania, Mauritania, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, and ambassadorships to Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. Ambassador Shinn was interviewed in July 2002 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

SHINN: Nine days before we were to get on a plane to Conakry, I was told by my career counselor that my assignment had to be changed and that I would not be going to Conakry. I was told that the ambassador wanted an officer who had a spouse who would work part-time, but she had to be fluent in French. My French was not that terrific and my wife's was even less so. The Department

canceled our assignment and someone else went to Conakry. At the time, we were devastated. But since we were dedicated to the Foreign Service, we swallowed hard and accepted our fate. It was not an auspicious beginning. In fact, our situation deteriorated because my career counselor promised to find us another African assignment; he just asked that we be patient. We extended the lease on our apartment in Arlington and waited for the next assignment. I would call the counselor every day to find out if anything had materialized; I would be told that they were still working on the problem. After a couple of weeks the counselor asked me to come to his office to talk about an African assignment. I raced to his office and asked where we were going. I was told: "Beirut!" I noted that that was not in Africa to which he said: "Oh, crap; it is all up there together somewhere!" That left me wondering about my career choice. I should note that this particular officer was selected out a few years later. In any case, we did not find this experience a good start in the Foreign Service.

Q: *So you went to Beirut?*

SHINN: Yes, and we loved it. It was a terrific assignment. It was one the best things that ever happened to us. We were there from late 1964 to mid-1966.

Q: *What was Lebanon like in 1964?*

SHINN: It was a wonderful country. It was the "garden spot of the Middle East." This was before the devastating war of 1967 which took place after we had left. Lebanon in 1964 was vibrant, alive and active. It was such an attractive country and so interesting historically. We lived on the Corniche - the waterfront - one block from the embassy. Even though the apartment was modest, it was fine for us. It was an idyllic arrangement as far as we were concerned. I unfortunately came down with viral meningitis, mumps and several other afflictions. I guess that is the price I had to pay for such a provincial upbringing. I did manage to catch these diseases in one tour and was spared them the rest of my life.

Nevertheless, we thoroughly enjoyed Beirut. We traveled extensively in our Volkswagen. We covered every nook and cranny of Lebanon and then traveled through much of the Middle East.

Q: *The Middle East was very quiet in this period, wasn't it?*

SHINN: Yes, it was. I can remember driving through Jordan, including Petra, down to the Gulf of Aqaba. We visited the West Bank which was then under Jordanian control. We visited Israel after obtaining the special visa which could be removed from the passport. We took a jitney to Tel Aviv and spent a few days there. We visited Jerusalem. Of course, the boundaries have changed now. It was fascinating to visit the Holy Land with my wife and small child.

Q: *What was your embassy assignment?*

SHINN: I was part of a junior officer rotational program. It was the ideal arrangement. I spent a year in the consular section - six months in visa work and six in protection and welfare. Lebanon was a fascinating place for the latter function. It was also provided some interesting visa work since we had a lot of fraud cases. I also spent six months in the general services office and about six

months in the economic-commercial section. I never worked in the political section.

Q: *Let's talk about the consular work first. On the visa side, what were the pressures during your tour?*

SHINN: They were pretty much the same as they are today minus the security concerns. There were people who said that they wanted to visit the U.S. for a short period, but who really were intent on immigrating permanently. Our job was to separate those who were going for just a visit from those who intended to remain in the U.S.

Q: *Did you find it difficult at first to refuse a visa?*

SHINN: It was hard, but you tend to get hard-nosed quickly. If you start making mistakes, you develop a track record of having been fooled by too many applicants. In those days, it was easier to keep track of people after they entered the U.S. Sometimes you learned from a friend that the applicant had no intention of returning to Lebanon. After being conned once or twice, you learn to be more careful. We had a Lebanese investigator on the staff that dealt with highly questionable cases. He would snoop around to verify the story told by the applicant. He had a pretty good record and a visa officer rarely went against his advice. I can remember a Middle East Airline stewardess, a very attractive young lady, who came in for a visa. He immediately told us to refuse the visa because she had no intention of returning. I listened to her story, went against our investigator's advice and issued a visitor's visa. About a month later, she came to my office to prove that she had returned. The investigator was impressed.

Q: *Did you have many Americans who were on drugs that needed help?*

SHINN: I had surprisingly little involvement with drug cases. There were cases of Americans who were either peddling or abusing drugs, but I don't remember this being a major part of the workload in the consular section. The one case that I do remember involved a very wealthy, elderly Lebanese-American who had lived in the U.S. for a long time and had become rich. He returned to Beirut probably to live out his last days. He was living in a fairly nice apartment where he died under mysterious circumstances. The police maintained that he had committed suicide by cutting his neck; we really didn't buy that story because according to the police he walked out to his balcony after inflicting the wound and jumped over the ledge to the pavement below. The story just did not seem reasonable. I am not sure that we ever solved the mystery. In any case, as the consular officer, I had to pack up all of his belongings. He had an enormous number of stock certificates as well as statements from brokerage houses that he had been reviewing when this "suicide" took place. The papers were soaked in blood and stuck together. I had to pull them apart and examine them. That is one experience I will not forget - going through these blood soaked documents to try to make sense of the estate.

Q: *Did you get involved in Lebanese community at all?*

SHINN: To some extent. Being a junior officer, one does less of that than the more senior officers. We had Lebanese friends, some of whom were employees of the embassy. But we spent a lot of our spare time traveling around the country. During the winter, there was a wonderful ski area at

Faraya. I was an avid skier. The embassy's beach house just south of Beirut was constructed on top of an old Roman ruin. The construction made a hash of the ruin, although most of it was adjacent to the beach house. In the winter, some terrific storms would slam against the ruins and carry some of the material out to a rocky area of the Mediterranean. Heavier items such as pottery shards and coins would lodge themselves in the cracks and crevices. We would spend summer days mining the rocks and crevices for these relics.

Q: *Did you detect a view on Israel at the time from either the Lebanese perspective or that of our embassy?*

SHINN: At the time, the Lebanese Christians, the Maronites, were in power in the country. They had a reasonably cordial relationship with Israel. The Muslims had a much stronger animosity towards Israel, but Americans tended to interact more with the Maronites than with the Muslims and may not have fully appreciated the sentiment. Israel was not a major issue in this period. In retrospect, I suspect there was a lot more animosity on the part of the Lebanese Muslims toward Israel than we were aware. We would hear about it in northern Lebanon where there were periodic anti-Israel demonstrations reflecting the population's unhappiness, but in Beirut the subject was rarely discussed.

Q: *Who was the ambassador?*

SHINN: I served under two ambassadors. The first was Armin Meyer; he was followed by Dwight Porter. They were both excellent ambassadors. Dayton Mack was the head of the political section and Ray Hunt was the administrative officer. He was later assassinated in Italy.

Q: *What were your first impressions of an American embassy?*

SHINN: The junior officer rotational program gave me a good feel for State Department operations at an embassy. I did not obtain much understanding for some of the other agencies represented in the embassy because I didn't have that much contact with them. We had a small AID office; the USIA component was quite large; I learned about the activities of both of those agencies. Some of our best friends, who lived in the same building as we did, worked for USIA. In fact, we knew some of the USIA staff better than we did many of our State colleagues.

There was an Arabic language school in Beirut and we did get to know some of the students who attended the school. I did not study Arabic.

Q: *Did the Beirut tour tempt you to focus more on the Arab world?*

SHINN: No. I was still committed to Africa. I made no effort to learn Arabic or to pursue a second tour in the region.

Q: *I should ask what happened to your worldly goods that were sent to Conakry.*

SHINN: The transportation company managed to stop the French car before it was put on a ship. All the food was delivered and the embassy kindly sold all of it. We didn't lose a cent on that

purchase. The household effects on the docks in Baltimore were sent to us in Beirut; they eventually showed up. It all worked out one way or another, but it was painful at the time.

Q: *You had a child with you in Beirut?*

SHINN: We arrived in Beirut with a three year old.

Q: *You left Beirut in 1966. It was a good time to leave the Middle East.*

KENTON W. KEITH
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1965-1966)

Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: When you came out, did you go right to language training?

KEITH: I went to language training for six months in Beirut to study Arabic.

Q: This is from '65-'66?

KEITH: Yes. Winter of '65-'66. I found myself in Beirut learning Arabic. From Beirut, I went on to Baghdad, which was my real training assignment.

Q: How did you feel when you got into Arabic?

KEITH: Fine. I liked it. I had an affinity for the language. Maybe I have an affinity for language learning, but I certainly found myself comfortable in Arabic. Then again, I was quite young.

Q: It makes a difference.

KEITH: It does indeed.

Q: Did you get any feel for the group you were with studying Arabic, about the Arabist corps?

KEITH: Impressive. People I knew at that time in Beirut were people I respected very much for their presence and their abilities in Arabic, their general knowledge, people like David Newton, who later became ambassador to Yemen and Iraq, and Ed Djerejian, who was assistant secretary.

Q: Did you have any feeling towards Israel?

KEITH: Not really. Most of us went into this rather special part of the Foreign Service where the pass key is Arabic, not a political point of view, but mastery of this rather difficult language. I believe most of us came to it with no preconception. I certainly had none. If somebody had told me that when you sign up to study Arabic, you suddenly become labeled by certain people as part of a group with a particular mindset and a political agenda, I would have been surprised. Looking back, I have met and known people who are Arabists who probably fit the worst stereotype that has been drawn of State Department Arabists. But that's one or two out of all the ones that I know, out of all the colleagues, out of all the people I have worked with and known professionally. The rest of it is just a bad rap. Since you raised the question of the Arabists as a group, most of us and certainly I know I speak for myself and I believe I speak for most of us who have been labeled as Arabists in the past, have one agenda and that is U.S. government interests, the interests of America and the American people. That isn't always the litmus test for people who are looking at the Foreign Service. If you don't share the view of certain groups as to what is in the U.S. government's best interest and if you think that the best interests of the U.S. may in some cases be served by opposing policies that favor a particular country or a particular point of view, then you are going to find yourself on the opposite side of that question from people who can sometimes be quite important.

JAMES A. PLACKE
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1965-1966)

Mr. Placke was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at the University of Nebraska. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. An Arabic Language Officer and Economic specialist, Mr. Placke was posted to Baghdad, Frankfurt, Kuwait, Tripoli, Ottawa and in Jeddah, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. Placke dealt primarily with Near East affairs. From 1982 to 1985 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East. Mr. Placke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: What was the problem with what you got here at FSI?

PLACKE: The instructor really wasn't very good. You were not in an Arab speaking environment and that made a big difference even though you didn't, you know, at least probably for the first year you didn't try to use, I didn't at least, try to use my Arabic casually in the course of normal living. Eventually it got to the point you had enough confidence and enough knowledge to do that, but just being around it did really seem to make a difference. Of course we were able to attract very qualified and dedicated instructors at FSI in Beirut. There were a couple of Lebanese, but mostly Palestinians.

Q: You were in FSI Beirut from when to when?

PLACKE: Let's see, we arrived there in March of '65 and I left in June of '66.

Q: Who was with you in your class?

PLACKE: Edward Djerejian. Ed and I went through the entire 21 months of language training together. Ed, of course, has had a distinguished career since, was Ambassador to Syria and Israel which was certainly unusual and also Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. Ed's a great guy and we got along very well. Unfortunately when I entered the Foreign Service, everyone was given and I think they still are, a language aptitude test.

Q: M-L-A-T. Modern Language Aptitude Test.

PLACKE: Right. My score, I don't remember what the numerical score it was, but it was a couple of points below the cutoff for hard language training and I proved that they were right. I was not a good candidate for hard language training. I really struggled with Arabic. It was the hardest, I think it was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life professionally. Ed on the other hand was a whiz at language. Of course, he already spoke French, Armenian and English before he even tackled Arabic and he just rolled through that and I kept plodding along at a much slower pace. Nonetheless we got along very well and still do.

Q: Any others in your class?

PLACKE: The three of us that started in March 1965 were Ed, Coradino Gatti and myself.

Q: While you were in the class, particularly Beirut, were you picking up anything from your teachers and all about the Arabic world?

PLACKE: Oh yes. It was, language training particularly for someone like myself who is not very adept at it, is fairly taxing and demanding. It takes a lot of concentration. So, I think you just mentally have to take a pause every now and then and the pause was always some discussion about current events, Arab political views and inevitably Middle Eastern issues, usually, very critical, or somewhat critical of U.S. policy positions. A lot of talk about what they had done earlier in their lives, how it was when they were growing up. So, yes, it absorbed a good bit about contemporary Arab society.

Q: Did you get to make a trip?

PLACKE: Yes. That was built into the program and Ed Djerejian and Coradino Gatti who retired many years ago - quite a long time before I did - and I went to Egypt and it was great, a great trip, wandered around and visited various agriculture development facilities. They would have somebody come and explain the whole thing to us in Arabic of course. It was, it served a useful educational purpose to get you out into the real world and talk to live people and we were using different vocabulary from what we would encounter at FSI in textbooks. We went up to S1, visited of course the antiquities, which were terrific. This was a period when things in Egypt were really at a very low point. It was of course, just before the '67 War. Egypt was isolated from the Western world, also ideologically lined up on the Soviet side so there was virtually no tourism. You could

walk through the monuments that today you have to stand in line and sort of shuffle through with a crowd of hundreds. There was nobody there. It was bad for Egypt, but it was great for us.

We went up to the Aswan high dam, which was then under construction by the Russians. This had been a great controversy. It was one of the things that the United States as a matter of policy opposed. Egypt was looking for international assistance to build the dam and regarded it as very important to economic development. The U.S. in fact demanded political quid pro quos which Egyptians were not prepared to provide and ultimately became a Russian showpiece project. I took pictures. I've got pictures of the foundations for the generating units, things that you wouldn't' be allowed to do today let alone when a plant like that was under construction. Security was almost nonexistent. In fact I don't remember seeing anybody in the security role. Yes, so it was an interesting and worthwhile trip. Then I went back to Beirut, packed out shortly thereafter and went on to Kuwait.

Q: While you were there, did you get any feel about Israel because this was going to be the sort of center of how everything else revolved?

PLACKE: While I was in Baghdad, my wife and I made a trip to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was then under Jordanian control, which is the only time I've ever visited Jerusalem. The '67 War was the point at which Israel occupies the territories that it still holds today including east Jerusalem and so those were still in Arab hands at the time I was in language training. So, so much of what is the fundamentals of today's controversy hadn't yet occurred at that point. A very strong,…because our instructors were mostly Palestinian who had been refugees at one point or another and ended up as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians did, in Lebanon. They weren't hostile towards Israel. Their view was that they had paid a price for assuaging the Western conscience for what had occurred to the Jews during the Second World War and they regarded Europe primarily, not just Germany, but Europe overall and behind Europe the United States as the sort of sponsors of Israel and the state that had deprived them of their rights. In those days the talk still was reclaiming all of the territorial areas, that Israel should pass out of existence or the most tolerant, liberal point of view was that they should be a multiethnic, multireligious secular society in that area which was combining Palestinians and Israelis. Some Palestinians were prepared, but not too many to acknowledge that Israel did have historic basis for a presence in that region. The level of tensions and the level of resentment that we see today was not nearly then what it is now.

ELDEN B. ERICKSON
Economic Counselor
Beirut (1965-1967)

Elden B. Erickson was born in Kansas in 1919. He served in the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army during World War II before joining the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in China, Algeria, France, Laos, Japan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Canada, and Frankfurt. Mr. Erickson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: *From there your next assignment was Beirut where you served from 1965-67. What were you doing?*

ERICKSON: I was economic counselor. It was the greatest period, I think, in Lebanese history. Everything was booming, everything was running. It was the banking center for the whole Middle East. There were about 80 banks, I think, operating in Beirut.

We could drive easily all through Syria. We drove to Turkey, to Jordan. Everyone was more or less friendly at the time.

Working was fantastic. We had lots of American businessmen, bankers, the airlines.

Q: *It was a time when anyone dealing with the Middle East, European and American firms, felt Beirut was the place where you put your offices.*

ERICKSON: It was a regional office for the Department of State, too. We had various elements of government there.

Q: *From the economic point of view, how did we view Lebanon?*

ERICKSON: Well, we were anxious to have Lebanon as a place to operate from, just as we were operating. It was THE one secure base in all the troubled Middle East that you could really count on to survive and be safe.

Q: *A lot of Saudis and Egyptians were investing...*

ERICKSON: The Gulf States too. The top people there would spend their summers in Lebanon and in the mountains there, rather than go to Europe.

Q: *Dwight Porter was the Ambassador.*

ERICKSON: Right.

Q: *How did he operate?*
ERICKSON: He was very low key, but I think he was very effective. He wasn't a Middle East expert, but he brought in everybody, cultivated, I think, the right people. Every other week he had a lunch for six or eight deputies, including Dayton Mak, who was political counselor. In small groups he brought in everybody. I was invited and participated in all the luncheons with the deputies and ministers. So I knew what was going on and given status by this as well.

Q: *How did we feel about the political situation there?*

ERICKSON: Well, Lebanon was the oasis of all this area and we felt the rest of the area was unsafe. But we really didn't consider Beirut and Lebanon would go down the drain at all.

Q: *Looking back on it, were there any indicators of these divisive forces with the Palestinians with*

the various sects?

ERICKSON: The last fifty years or so the sects were negotiating with each other to strike a balance. Of course the Christians would count overseas Christians in order to give them an edge over the Muslims. But there was so much at stake in Lebanon that they usually negotiated so that things would go on and prosper.

Q: *What was the general impression of our landing in Lebanon in 1958? This was some years later, but did people feel that it was unnecessary or a good thing?*

ERICKSON: Most of the ones I talked to about it felt that it had to be done and it was a good thing that we did. They always hoped that we would do it again if necessary. We were looked upon as somebody who had always helped them.

Q: *How about Israel? What was the view you had towards our reporting in Israel and the situation there?*

ERICKSON: Actually there didn't seem to be all that many problems per se with Israel. Things were just sort of at a status quo during those two years.

Q: *When did you leave Beirut?*

ERICKSON: During the 1967 War. We were evacuated.

Q: *What was your impression when this first came about?*

ERICKSON: Things were already getting unsettled in other parts of the Middle East. Bob Paganelli, who was in Damascus, called us the week before and asked us if we would meet him at Chtaura and pick up Donna Paganelli and the two girls and bring them into Beirut and see that they left the country, because it was already tense in Syria. So we drove over and brought them back and put them on a ship. Within a week the war started in Beirut. We got to the evacuation center, Rome, earlier then they did because we flew.

Q: *When this war came was there immediate change?*

ERICKSON: Yes, but we did not...Beirut was kind of sacrosanct. We knew things had happened everywhere else but you felt secure in Beirut. It had always survived and was the haven for all the other refugees.

Q: *What was the reason for your evacuation?*

ERICKSON: Oh, on the very first day they stormed the Embassy and set fire in the lobby and trapped people there. They were setting fires at the University and the whole downtown port area was ablaze.

Q: *Who were they?*

ERICKSON: Mainly Palestinians. But incitement was being broadcast from Cairo. The Israelis threatened to bomb the airport. We had a part to play in that to try to keep them from bombing.

Q: *How did the Embassy react to this?*

ERICKSON: Mostly with shock. Again, we were up on the roof burning classified material practically all night. We hadn't disposed of any classified material. Again we felt Beirut was safe.

Q: *Did you get any feeling about the Arabists in the Embassy? Did they pretty well stick to the political side? As an economic counselor were you able to use any of them?*

ERICKSON: Oh, yes. We had them in the economic section as well as the political section.

Q: *What was your impression of them?*

ERICKSON: Oh, again, they were just as good as the Japanese. We really chose, for those languages, I think, good officers. There may have been a few who were not, but by and large they were great. Ed Djerejian was at the language school, finished and became the Ambassador's aide at that time.

Q: *How did they evacuate you?*

ERICKSON: By plane. First you would assemble at AUB, (American University, Beirut) and have a convey or protected bus to the airport. But even then there was firing going on and you weren't sure whether....When my wife and son were at AUB they were breaking the windows and stuff at the time. They were on one of the first three planes that got out. It was touch and go. I was in the Embassy trying to contact people and telling them to get out. My finger was bloodied from dialing. I was telling people where there would be a bus, where they should try to go in order to get out.

Q: *It must have caught the whole American business community as it caught the Embassy, by surprise.*

ERICKSON: Well, it did, yes. I would like to put in a plug for Pan Am. They really came through like they did in the Far East and everywhere else to help evacuate.

Q: *Pan American Airlines that is now defunct.*

ERICKSON: I know, it is really sad for all the people who had counted on them for all those years.

Q: *So your tour was cut?*

ERICKSON: Well, we were due for home leave in two weeks. We got back and my son had to have a lung removed; so we didn't return. Otherwise we would have gone back.

DWIGHT J. PORTER
Ambassador
Lebanon (1965-1970)

Ambassador Dwight J. Porter was born in Oklahoma in 1916 and graduated from Grinnell College. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Frankfurt, London, Bonn, Vienna, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Lebanon. This interview was conducted by Horace G. Torbert in 1990.

PORTER: I was offered two or three ambassadorial posts and I really don't know why I decided to pick Lebanon. It seemed to be a particularly interesting part of the world and one that I had gotten more and more interested in after my war college experience. I had done a lot of reading and studying, but I had never served in the Middle East before. Of course I wasn't one of those 'accursed' Arabists who get some much venom and vile in the American press. But I did enjoy that experience. It was a period when Lebanon was on the slippery slope down, and it was so sad to be there and to experience it all, and to try to put your finger, and then your fist, in the dike - knowing all the time that somehow or other course of events in the Middle East and the whole political life of that part of the world was bringing Lebanon to its knees. There was not much we could do about it. Once the Palestinians got into Lebanon, right after the creation of Israel, it was a cancer that was gnawing at the basis of what was a very fragile political structure in any case. And of course that finally blew it open.

Q: *Had the Christian armies started making trouble by that time?*

PORTER: That was later. Of course within any of the fourteen religious groups that existed or coexisted in Lebanon at that point, there was always friction, and the clan was probably even more significant than the religious entity. And there were usually several clans - I use the term loosely - vying for ascendancy within a religious group. The family comes first, the clan comes second and the religious affiliation third, and somewhere way below that is Lebanese nationality, or nation-state feeling. Of course the Islamic side in Lebanon really disliked the Palestinians - there is really a strong dislike among the Muslims for them in that part of the world - but they had to show solidarity when the chips were down, when there was nothing else a God-fearing Muslim could do. So this tended to constantly be a major centrifugal force and pulling the religious balance apart.

Of course one can write a book about that, and many have. I think I could summarize it best by saying that the real guillotine blow to Lebanon came in 1969 - this is not publicized too much - by the signing of the Cairo Agreement. The Cairo Agreement wasn't even approved by the Lebanese president or the political structure, but it was negotiated by the commanding general, Bustani, of the Lebanese forces. He signed with Nasser and what it did in effect was to get the Lebanese security forces out of the Lebanese camps and allowed the Palestinians to operate within the areas where they lived with autonomy, as almost a state within a state. Well, once the *Surete* left the camps, that was the end of it. Immediately the Lebanese lost control and the Palestinians, who were about twelve percent of the population, maybe even more, quickly got armed, and they lived a separate life of their own within the Lebanese state.

Q: *Of course the Israelis felt they had to move in.*

PORTER That is what of course happened. Long before that there was a major civil war.

Q: *You were there for the 1967 War?*

PORTER Yes, I was there from 1965 to 1970 and up until the Cairo Agreement it looked to me like they might be able to hold together for a while longer, but the pressures that led to that agreement would have led to something comparable within the next year or two. The Christians, of course, bitterly resisted any change at all in the structure which allowed them to have a majority in what was going on in Lebanon when they were no longer the demographic majority. That changed very dramatically. You had these poor little Shi'a farmers up in the hillside. I don't know how they survived. They grew a little tabacco and having ten or twelve kids, whereas the rich Christians were having one or two kids. The rich Sunnis were having two or three kids. The Palestinians were also having an effect on this. The Lebanese Muslims were reluctant allies, they did not like them but when the chips were down they had to support them, or at least not resist them and let them have their own way. So gradually this Palestinian cancer grew and grew and eventually destroyed the state. Whether or not this state could have endured if there had not been an Israel or perhaps if there had been no Palestinian exodus from Israel, if somewhat moot. It probably would have endured because it was doing what a state has to do, and that was providing a lot of prosperity to a lot of people and being a pleasant place to live. This was part of the reason for its prosperity, because all the oil money was going in, in one way or another. The Lebanese knew how to use it, how to bank it.

Q: *This is December 3, 1990. When we left two weeks ago you had pretty well gone over the political situation in Lebanon and the influence of the various elements and the sad fall which you attributed very much to the influx of the Palestine refugees. Would you like to go on from there and talk about the types of problems the embassy faced?*

PORTER Of course Lebanon with its Christian-Muslim balance, balancing act, had a long history, going back to the crusades, of association with the West. Most Americans forget just how dominant the relationship in all the Arab world the relationship, historical and current, the relationship with the West has been. In Lebanon that was even uniquely so, because over the centuries the Lebanese Christians had felt that they had particularly been the wards of the Europeans, primarily the French, and French culture largely dominated the Christian world of Lebanon until the creation the American University of Beirut and all of the secondary schools which went with it, which was accomplished largely by American missionaries from many of the Ivy-league universities, Princeton being the dominant one. So by the time I got there there was sort of a dichotomy between French-American cultural influences, for by that time a large body of alumni had come out of the American University and the French influence, which was perpetuated not only by very active French government cultural activities but of course by schools and language courses which the French continued. The Christians in Lebanon manipulated this dichotomy between the French and American influence; they were convinced that by playing one side against the other somehow they could achieve special influence, financial rewards, or other rewards. Of course the uncertain world of the Lebanese Christians always made them look outward, keeping a foot in the outside world. They were, of course, great emigrants, they were

scattered all over the world. And although they assimilated well wherever the emigrated, they were always loyal to the family and the clan in Lebanon. Of course one of the aspects of Lebanese prosperity was the constant remittances sent back by wealthy Lebanese, who seemed to do extremely well in business, banking and commerce all over the world. Lebanese were always very proud of their prowess in making money and it even shows today when so many had to leave Lebanon, just how much money they did have. It has been invested in the outside world and continued to make money for them.

This French-U.S. rivalry, enhanced by the feeling of the Lebanese that they could play on it to benefit themselves, created a lot of amusing and interesting situations in Lebanon. Every once and a while it became necessary for me to talk to the French ambassador to get things cooled off. The French government loved to play it too; they really did want dominance, in the sense of cultural dominance, in Christian Lebanon. Most Lebanese liked that; they remembered how the French had saved them in the past by force of arms, particularly in the middle of the last century when the Druze had been killing Lebanese in wholesale fashion and the French had sent in an army and reversed the fortunes of the Christians.

Our embassy in Lebanon was a regional embassy in many ways, even when I got there and the U.S. was represented in most Arab countries. We still were the regional center in terms of commercial and cultural activities. We had several regional officers who moved around the Gulf and in the smaller Arab countries performing commercial and cultural activities. After the 1967 war, when most Arab countries broke relations with America we, of course, assumed a much larger role. The embassy and intelligence activities were substantially run from the Beirut embassy. At that point we had several hundred American employees who were watching much of the Arab world. Among other countries we did not then have representation in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq and some of the peripheral countries like Sudan and Yemen.

It was an extremely busy embassy in the late 60's. Beirut stayed a pleasant place to live until 1970 when the Palestinians really asserted themselves as a state within a state and got away with it. From that point on, one hardly slept a night without hearing shooting somewhere in Beirut. I left in 1970 and even as I left things were so uncertain it took a battalion of loyal troops to get me to the airport and get me out. There was a lot of anti-American sentiment that was trying to assert itself and they feared an outburst of anti-Americanism at that airport as I left. I think that personally I gained a lot of respect from all sides in Lebanon because I tried to have a balanced position between the various religious groups and sects. It was interesting that the Sunni prime minister sent me a letter of regret after I left about the fact that the airport was almost under siege when I departed. He said, "If I had only known that I would have come down and stood with you as you departed." That was a nice vote of confidence. I think it was a surprise to the Lebanese, this spontaneous thing. At that point the street were controlled by Nasserist gangs. Nasser was the hero of the Arab world and the Shia were still very much behind the scene, even though by that time they were in the majority demographically. They were a somewhat despised so-called minority still run by old, outmoded clan leaders, none of whom today has any influence whatsoever. At that point the mullahs were very much not in the leadership role. The role of the old boys was really worthless as political leaders but they still held dominance for traditional reason.

It really was impossible in the Middle East, in the broad sense, and in Lebanon in the narrow sense,

to help either side, either the Christian or the Muslims; they were both so incapable of compromise, particularly the Christians. Their inability to act in concert since each sect was full of jealousies and rivalries for leadership, particularly the Maronites. One found it almost impossible to help the Lebanese to find a rational political structure. There were a lot of Lebanese Christians who were aware of this but just were unable to do anything about it. So in many ways the Christians have sowed the seeds of their own destruction in Lebanon, which finally became particularly evident in the last few months when the Christians were fighting each other with substantial armies while the rest of Muslim Lebanon stood back to wait for them to kill each other off.

The Syrians were always very active in Lebanon. They never recognized the independence of Lebanon as a state; today they seem to be increasingly successful in their long-term objective in incorporating Lebanon. Perhaps not as part of Greater Syria, but as a satellite of Syria.

Q: *One gets the impression from perhaps fiction that one reads that in that period the U.S.-Lebanese relationship was carried on to a great extent by the CIA.*

PORTER I think that in the early days that might have been true. I think when I was there it was not so. I always had close relationships with the intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA. I don't think that DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] really had much influence in the country. I decided very quickly that I did not want that to happen, that there be a problem with the intelligence agencies. I think we succeeded in working together closely, at least in general, and knew in general what they were doing. I did not need to or want to know specifics. It seems to me that it worked out. The CIA worked very closely with me once they got to know me. We did develop the best penetration that one has ever had in the Palestinian movement and in the leadership structure in the Middle East at that time. We really knew what was going on. Tragically that was lost and finally almost totally lost when the embassy was bombed several years after I left. Most of the CIA talent that we had in the Middle East was caught in the bombing and killed. They were some of the most capable people I had known as young officers.

In the early days, long before I got there in the 1950s, the Middle East was just a great playing field for the intelligence agencies; it was too easy and they had a lot of fun and enjoyed it. There was no question about the fact that several of the Western intelligence agencies were extremely well represented among the political leadership, not just the Americans. Overall the troubles in the Middle East hung the Israeli problem and the identification of the U.S. with Israel. I tried several times to get a dialogue started between the Lebanese and the Israelis. The Lebanese were always pretty afraid to do it. The Christians had their own subterranean contacts with Israel which had developed in the 1958 fighting, or revolution, or whatever you want to call it. It came out clearly when Israel was the principal ally of the Lebanese government (read Christians) in the heavy fighting that occurred in the early and mid-70s during the Civil War, which was first with the Palestinians and then from time to time with the other Christians and with certain Muslim militia. This was the kiss of death for American influence in Lebanon. Once we got tarred with the brush of being the defenders of Israel, it was almost impossible for political leaders in Lebanon, dearly as they might want to, to openly associate themselves with American interests or American presence. That was even more true in the rest of the Arab world. But in Lebanon even the Christians had to take a stance of anti-Americanism as affected the Arab-Israeli problem.

The embassy was still quite active and quite effective when I left in 1970, but it was also manifestly clear to me at that point that Lebanon was on the slippery slope and there was not much we could do about it; that it would indeed pretty much dissolve in fighting and bloodshed. That is pretty much what happened.

I had several differences of policy view with the Department on occasion when I was there. One of the unpopular suggestions I made to the Department was that we would never really have peace in the Middle East until we get the Russians to join with us in making or establishing or enforcing the peace. I think that was true. Now things have changed so dramatically that the whole nature of the Soviet-American equation in the Middle East has changed. But certainly at that point it was clear to me that the Soviets could have effectively destroyed any efforts we made for peace. They had that much influence in the Middle East. It was not very hard to do in any case since the Israelis were manifestly not going to participate in any international conference where the Russians were present.

In the middle of my tour in Lebanon the '67 war occurred, and that resulted in a sudden and tremendous outburst of anti-Americanism. I had to make the tough decision to evacuate almost all the dependents and all but the most essential Americans in the embassy and to urge other Americans to leave. Gradually Americans began to filter back in towards the fall, the war was in June. I had to make a decision whether or not I could go back or would ask the Department to assign me somewhere else. I had to leave Lebanon; there was a great desire on the part of Lebanon not to break relations with the U.S. but they had to show solidarity with the Arab world, which almost universally broke relations. I finally suggested to the Lebanese, and it worked out very well, that instead of breaking relations, that we follow a technique of recalling ambassadors. They recalled their ambassador first and therefore I had to be recalled, but we did not break relations as a result. We were able to keep a fairly good skeleton force of about 50-60 Americans in the embassy. My family had already gone out earlier with the general exodus of Americans from Beirut, and a few days later I went out on this recall of ambassadors ploy. I spent the summer in Washington doing my best to convince the Department that this was the great time for peace in the Middle East. The Israeli sensational victory in the '67 war and had there been a little show of magnanimity I think the Arab world would have fallen over itself suing for peace. If the Israelis had, for instance, voluntarily pulled back from the Sinai, the Canal and from all or most of the other occupied territories in exchange for peace, I think that at that point it would have been very easy to do. But it was simply impossible for any Israeli politician to make that judgment and the American government did not even ask the Israeli government to do it. Bill Rogers, Secretary of State at that point, came as close as anybody could with the Rogers Plan - that was later in 1969. That was about the only effort that was made by the U.S. Government in the decade of the 1960s to carry peace efforts forward.

I think it was a very narrow window when Israel after its magnificent victory really could have gotten the Arabs to accept the existence of the state of Israel in a reasonable territorial framework in exchange for giving back territory. That has never been done and now it won't be, short of a very drastic change in the circumstances and politics.

I had a visit from an envoy from the Lebanese president in late August to talk about the possibility

of restoring full relations. I had five kids that had to go to school at that point and I sent word back to the president that if we were going to resume relations we had better pick some time in early September so I could get back and get my kids into the American Community School, which was a great institution in Beirut. It closed down during the summer while the '67 war was on. The Americans were coming back and there was a great American financial business community in Beirut that defended that school, which took ARAMCO kids and from around the Arab world, this was before the big buildup of Americans in Saudi Arabia and schools for their children there - then there were none.

The president picked right up on that saying "we can't have the kids uneducated" and so we went back in early September. It may be unique in the annual of diplomacy that the children of the ambassador determined the date of renewal of diplomatic relations. I think that is about enough on Lebanon.

Q: *Do you want to say how you came to move? You had been there five years and it was obviously time to move.*

PORTER It is interesting to know the machinery of movement. Harking back to the Lebanese firm belief that their destinies were all ordained by the Western great powers, the Lebanese presidential election was coming up. I had one Lebanese president, Charles Helon; he had just been inaugurated just before I got there. The elections were coming up and the Lebanese press was rife with the usual rumors that the Americans were buying the election, or only occasionally that the French were buying the election. The French handled the press too well for that to happen often; it was the Americans who were buying the election. This was a wonderful opportunity for the anti-Americans, particularly the Nasserist and Communist press. Beirut had about 60 newspapers, 55 at least existed to be the mouthpiece of whoever would buy them at the moment. There were a lot of people who did not like America who were buying those papers. So, I set out to do my best to assure that the U.S. would not interfere in that election, it would not take sides, or give help financially or give any type of endorsement in any manner. I thought it was particularly important that I leave just before the election so that there could be no question; it would enhance our role of hands off.

Q: *And it would given the new man a chance to start with a new president.*

PORTER Actually the new president who was elected was a good friend of mine. If I had had a chance to pick one he would not have been the one I would have picked, but *c'est la vie*. It turned out that he was not very good. Every time I would have lunch or be seen with a presidential candidate, all of whom were old friends of mine at that point, the press would pick it up and run with it, that this was a visible endorsement of X, Y or Z. I asked the Department to get me out on that particular date, but it was unfortunately delayed a little so that the election occurred just before I left so it was incumbent on me to make at least one call on the new president. He wanted to see me before he saw any other ambassador. He wanted to make damned sure that he had been endorsed by the Americans. His name was Franjieh. In the process many old friends did get annoyed at me because they did want me to endorse their particular candidate. Camille Chamoun, who had been the president and evicted in 1958 when the country almost went through a catastrophe and the Marines landed to preserve law and order, was very anxious to be reelected. Of

course it was, a) an impossibility and b) it would have set the country into another tailspin. Among others was Charles Malik, who was of course well-known at this stage and who always was at prayer breakfasts at the White House. I am told that Charles Malik went around later saying that he was responsible for getting me kicked out of Lebanon, simply because I had not endorsed his candidacy for the presidency. It was rather amusing, hardly broke my spirit. So that created the timing of my departure; the Department would have liked me to stay on for awhile, they had not planned on a successor, but going on six years was a long time. It did lead some credence to the story that the Americans were indulging themselves too much in interference in Lebanese affairs. While I was there the French had at least three ambassadors, so did the Brits.

Well, where to go? At that point there was not much of a choice. There weren't any Middle East posts, the new administration had really almost filled the other positions, this being in September. I had good contacts with Richard Nixon. As a matter of fact he had spent almost four days with me in Lebanon when he was out in political ostracism. During that period when he was in New York as a lawyer. He spent four days with me learning about Lebanon and the Middle East, pumping me and others about the Middle East, which certainly does reinforce my earlier views that he was a very hard working man and wanting to know what was going on.

Q: *Very interested in foreign affairs.*

PORTER After that he had written me a fine letter, which amusing enough had been burned by my new secretary in 1967 when the embassy was under siege at the time of the '67 war, when all of our records were burned and we came within an ace of being invaded by an angry mob, but fortunately we weren't. You know, that is almost worth a story in itself. There was a tremendously angry mob and nobody but a handful of policemen guarding the embassy. At that time there were a couple of thousand in the mob. The army had been called.
Q: *This was during the war?*

PORTER This was during the week of the '67 war, I think it was probably the second day of the war. We were being guarded by a very small, elite, police unit which had a fine cadre of policemen, and there were two jeep loads of them - and that was it. The Marines, of whom we had eight, said they wanted to 'lock and load' their weapons. It did look like we were going to be overrun. I had to make a very quick decision and said, "No" and see what the police could do and of course the troops were on their way. What really saved us was that the lieutenant of the police group was at the front door, a huge glass door, there was none of the security that embassies now have, and somebody tried to rush him. He literally picked up the man and threw him against the wall and killed him on the spot. The crowd drew back. By the time they reformed the troops arrived and saved the situation.

Q: *I hope you were able to decorate the policeman.*

PORTER I tried very hard, but our penurious government would not do a thing and about all I could do was to scrape together a little from our intelligence agencies to see that at least he got a few gifts. It did occur to me that he really did not want a medal, that might have been making him a target. Tragically later on he was killed. Not for defending American interests but just defending his country. That is one of the things that has disturbed me about the Foreign Service - that it is

unable to respond to something like that. I tried to get emergency funds set up when I was Assistant Secretary to do this sort of thing, but we just were not able to do it. One of the advantages of rich, political ambassadors is that they can do it out of their own pocket on some occasions. Sometimes we can make a little emergency fund in the embassy, but strictly, I suppose illegal, one would sell old tires, old batteries and one thing or another and one could develop a little fund. One could at least send flowers to the funeral of a local employee or in this case I think I used the fund to give the lieutenant a case of whisky. But that was about all you could do. Even that was not really legal although I think everybody did it.

JAMES K. BISHOP, Jr.
Commercial Officer
Beirut (1966-1968)

Ambassador James K. Bishop, Jr. was born in New York in 1938. He received his bachelor's degree from Holy Cross College in 1960. His career has included positions in Auckland, Beirut, Yaounde, and ambassadorships to Nigeria, Liberia, and Somalia. Ambassador Bishop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1995.

Q: *You left Auckland in 1966 and went to Beirut from Summer of 1966 to the Fall of 1968. How did that happen?*

BISHOP: By this time, I had given up trying to get an assignment in a real Far East country. I had developed an interest in Africa. My strategy was to seek an assignment to North Africa where I could become acquainted with Africa while still close enough to Europe, which I had not even visited. So I was assigned to Beirut with the rationale that I wanted to go to a Middle Eastern country--North Africa perhaps being perceived as the Middle East. I was assigned to Beirut as a visa officer, which annoyed me tremendously because in Auckland, my visa experience was just part of a much broader range of assignments. I complained to Washington; I complained to Ambassador Dwight Porter. He promised to look for another assignment after my arrival in Beirut. In fact, after six months, I escaped from the Visa Section and became the junior Commercial officer. I had no particular qualifications for that, but we had a local employee who was a graduate in economics from the American University in Beirut; in quiet moments, he taught me the fundamentals of national income accounting, along with other matters that I had to know in order to begin doing some economic reporting, in addition to filling out the world trade directory report forms.

We were primarily interested in selling food stuffs. The Lebanese were great importers of American foodstuffs at a retail level. We also were trying to sell planes and aircraft parts to Middle East Airline. We had a civil air attaché in the Economic Section; I occasionally had to substitute for him--as the junior member of the section, I used to substitute for any more senior member who might be absent. So I learned a little about civil aviation, oil, etc.

We became involved in the refloating of a bank that failed--it was IntraBank, the largest Arab-owned bank. It went into bankruptcy after the 1967 war. The Commodity Credit Corporation was owed $20 million--which at the time was a much more substantial amount than it is today. That was a fascinating exercise in trying to revive a failed financial institution; at the time I was understudying the economist on the staff. He fell ill with hepatitis in the middle of the rescue operation, leaving me to fill in for him. We had a group of investment bankers from New York--mainly Jewish--who sat late into the night with senior members of the Lebanese government--who were mostly Muslim. Rashid Karami was the Minister of Finance; he was responsible for putting the bank back on its feet, requiring collaboration across national and religious boundaries.

I had no particular problem dealing with Lebanese commercial interests, despite their reputation for sharpness and bargainers *par excellent*. I learned more about the Lebanese character as a consular officer. I had a number of people who would call on me and try to slip money to me hidden in their passports or would swear literally on the Bible that they didn't have any relatives in the United States--they were just trying to visit the country as tourists. Of course, two weeks after we refused such a visa request, the applicant's brother would show up from the US demanding to know why his brother's visa had been denied. We had some remarkable people who worked for us. I don't think the Foreign Service does justice to its local employees. For example, in Beirut, during the 1967 period--after our families had been evacuated, but after the situation had sufficiently stabilized so that I could return to my own house--one of the fellows who had worked for me--Joseph Karam--came to visit me traveling through parts of the city where relations between Christians and Muslims had become quite tense--i.e. at some personal risk. He just wanted to see how I was doing and to offer any assistance that he might be able to provide. He later lost an eye during the first bombing of the Embassy; he lost all of the meat off his leg during the second bombing. At that point he was moved to another Embassy in one of the Gulf States, so that he could work long enough to retire. There were other examples of true loyalty. On the first day we were able to open the Embassy for business, the consular staff reported for duty, at some personal risk both during their travels to and from the Embassy and during the occasional attacks on the Embassy.

I did get sucked back into consular work from time to time as emergencies arose. One of the most interesting events in which I participated--which had nothing to do with my formal job description--was the release of the first POWs from Southeast Asia. They were put aboard a Czech airline headed for Prague. The White House called the Ambassador and instructed him to get the POWs off the plane in Beirut, where it would land for refueling; it didn't want them used as propaganda fodder upon arrival in Prague. I had made the acquaintance of the Beirut airport security chief while doing consular work, He, at my request, told the Czech plane that it could not leave until I had a chance to board it. So a CIA officer and I drove to the plane. He told me that I had not seen mean people until I had seen Czech security officers; they would undoubtedly beat the hell out of me as soon as I put my foot on the gangway. But I walked up the gangway anyway; I passed Tom Hayden--then a chief California anti-war protester--who in his inebriated state, could not stop me though he tried. I walked back to one of the three POWs and sat down to talk to him to try to convince him to leave the plane. He also had consumed generous amounts of alcohol. I told him the President wanted him off the plane. He wanted to know what the US Army wanted him to

do. I assured him that the US Army also wanted him off the plane. So he and the others agreed and had to help one, who later died, down the ramp stairs.

There were a number of episodes that enlivened our tour in Beirut. Some were not ones that normally are encountered by a Foreign Service officer. One day, a Soviet woman, who was the wife of a senior KGB official, jumped ship in Beirut. Her arrival came to the attention of the CIA station, which put her in a safe house. Then Washington decided that we didn't want the woman; afraid that she might be a *agent provocateur* of some sort. The Station Chief came to me and asked whether I could figure out some way to get her out of the country. I did have contacts among various refugee groups which I had developed doing consular work. I talked to some of them and managed to have her moved to a convent, where she was protected by the nuns--not to mention a Lebanese security detachment. The Soviets apparently protested because I was summoned to the Foreign Ministry together with Dayton Mak. I was told by the Foreign Office Secretary General that it had no record of my assignment. I showed him my Foreign Ministry issued diplomatic identity card, suggesting this should enable his staff to find some record of me. We then discussed the Soviet woman, who with the help of some of our consular contacts, was able to leave the country without being stopped by the Soviets.

The most interesting part of my tour came in 1967, during the so called "Six Day War" between Israel on one side and Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the other. By that point, as I said, I had joined the Commercial Section. But with the onset of the conflict, I was instructed to return to the Consular Section to help out with the evacuation of the Americans. We evacuated 3,300 people in 36 hours by getting Pan Am to send to Beirut eighteen aircraft, leasing a half a dozen MEA airplanes, and commandeering an American ship which happened to be in port. The Foreign Service manual gave us the authority to do that; so we did. We put 600 people on the deck of the ship, which took them to Cyprus. It was a pretty wild time.

We used the campus of the American University as the evacuation center. I sat up shop there with my consular staff--my faithful Lebanese assistants. We did the necessary documentation work for the evacuees. At one point, we heard gunfire which seemed to be getting closer and closer to us. We could see the British Embassy staff, whose chancery was next to the University compound, busy burning their classified documents on the balcony. They also heard the gun fire; they went back inside and then returned carrying hockey sticks and cricket bats--to repel anyone who might have tried to climb into the building, I guess. As it turned out, the gun fire came from Lebanese troops who were retreating in the face of Palestinian mobs that were sweeping through the campus. We were harassed by the Palestinians who were very suspicious of the use we might be making of our walkie-talkies, but no physical damage was inflicted. At night, we did hear and see explosions in the harbor. I remember people playing guitars and singing while waiting for buses to take them to the airport. We had to travel through neighborhoods filled with Palestinian refugees, who were presumably hostile. We had Lebanese soldiers and policemen, with machine guns, on the buses.

We took the evacuees to the airport and put them on the planes. I said goodbye to my own family. No one knew where the planes were going because Pan Am had pulled them off of their regular routes and was going to send each plane to a point where it could be used again for regular Pan Am flights. I was asked to stay in Beirut along with about 25 other embassy employees out of a complement of 225 that we had when the war started. The staff which was left included Marines,

younger officers and the DCM--the Ambassador having been ordered to evacuate. It was an exciting time for a few days.

I was the duty officer the night Nasser announced that he was resigning. I was in the chancery with just a Marine and an Army captain who dropped in for conversation. We had people grouped together in apartments located on the two main access routes to the Embassy. Someone in one of the apartments reported by radio that a mob of about 5,000 people was marching by toward the Embassy. I had been given the name of a Captain Nohas--I believe--at military headquarters whom I was to call in case of an emergency. So I called him and he told me that he was aware of the mob. He said that there were some Lebanese army tanks were following the mob. I suggested that perhaps it would be wiser to have the tanks move ahead of the mob so that they could come between it and the Embassy. Ultimately, the tanks did move ahead of the mob and broke the mob up before it could do any more damage to the Embassy. By then the embassy had been fire bombed and shot up by protestors.

The next morning, I went to an apartment occupied by three other officers to get some sleep. This apartment overlooked another approach to the Embassy. As dawn broke, I heard mobs below chanting "Nasser! Nasser! Nasser!" The landlord came into the apartment and noticed that we had a radio and a weapon. A Shiite, he said: "I will never tell the mob that you are here." When he left, we discussed the situation. We had been considering moving anyway; so we decided that we would go one at a time, disguised to appear as Lebanese as possible. The first of my apartment mates to leave was Ed Djerejian, who spoke Armenian, Arabic and French. As he was Armenian, he looked like some members of the local population. Then David Zweifel went; he was bald and could have passed as an Egyptian. He also spoke Arabic. Then I slipped out. That left Tucker Scully--6'2 and blond. The only clothes he had with him were a blue button down shirt, chinos and sneakers. There was no way that he could pass for a native. He reproached us later for having moved so rapidly and keeping our distance from him; we had agreed before leaving the apartment that we would stay within a hundred yards of each other. By the time we neared the embassy, the troops had established a perimeter around it. Djerejian identified himself to an officer who happened to be a Maronite Christian, and greeted him with "Viva Chamoun! Viva Eisenhower!" He gave Ed a big embrace and let us through the military cordon to the Embassy.

When we arrived in Beirut, we found politics to be communal. We lived in a Druze quarter--deliberately. We were looking for a building that had some character. We had decided that we would put our kids into local schools so that they could learn French and Arabic. We found an apartment on the ground floor of a building owned by the Elgawi family. Across the street, there was a group of Syrian laborers living in the basement--there must have been twenty living in two rooms. The Elgawi's kids were taxi drivers. We learned--as much as foreigners could learn--about the Druze who lived in the same building with us.

As a consular officer, responsible for the approval of visas, I was very much sought after the Lebanese; we had lots of social invitations--mainly from the Christians--the Maronites and the Orthodox--but not exclusively so. Many Christians would not acknowledge that they were Lebanese; they preferred to be known as Phoenicians, putting as much distance between themselves and the Muslims as they could. The fracture lines that later ripped Lebanon apart were quite evident in the mid-1960s, even though communal violence had not yet broken out. When we

had to evacuate, I saw a sign on a wall which read: "Saturday today; Sunday tomorrow" implying that the Jews would be attacked first and then the Christians.

We had to get people out of various neighborhoods after the evacuation because mobs went through those areas where Americans lived, destroying any property that might have been ours.

The American University of Beirut was attended by about 600 students from outside Lebanon who were supported by USAID. I remember seeing some of the most attractive Africans I had ever seen--largely female Sudanese--on the campus. AID also was providing a direct subsidy to the University; there were many Americans teaching there. The American high school was nearly adjacent to the University campus. We had personal relationships with a number of faculty members--both American and Lebanese. The campus was right next to the Embassy, and we were in and out of it regularly. As I mentioned, we used the campus as a staging area for the evacuation of the Americans. We were harassed by the mobs but they never attacked any building on the campus. They did attack the Chancery; a machine gun bullet went right through where I might have been sitting had I been in my office at the time. We had fires upstairs and downstairs--the one upstairs was set by the Naval Attaché, who was drunk and tried to use a thermal grenade to burn the weapons that he had stored in his vault--against standing orders. He damn near burned down the building. The Marines were busy fighting the fires set on the first and second floors by the Molotov cocktails that had been lobbed in from the outside and also had to put out the fire set by the Naval Attaché.

Ambassador Dwight Porter was a good ambassador although he could be a little austere at times. While I was getting the POWs off the plane, he was in the basement of the airport building surveying the scene through a pair of binoculars. He could not have been nicer to me after that incident, even calling public attention to my alleged powers of persuasion which had talked these men into deplaning.

I can remember a staff meeting that I attended as the 1967 war approached; various armies were moving in various directions. We had an Air Force Attaché, who unfortunately was no more capable that the Naval Attaché. He reported that the four divisions of the Iraqi army were moving to the Jordanian frontier on their way to Israel. Porter looked down the table, said: "And I suppose the residuals are forming a welcoming party for the Kurds who are arriving in Baghdad." Ambassador and Mrs. Porter were quite attentive to the Embassy staff. I didn't have a close relationship with him, but people who worked closer to him felt the generosity that both he and Mrs. Porter had extended to them. He didn't speak Arabic, but from my vantage point, he seemed to be well regarded by all elements of the Lebanese community.

When I left Lebanon, I was offered by former DCM Drew Middleton, who had gone to work in PER (Office of Personnel), an opportunity to go to Arabic training which I declined with thanks. I did not want to spend the rest of my career dealing with the Middle East. In the first place, I believed that our domestic politics would prevent us from taking a balanced position and I did not want to spend my life going to cocktail parties, being subjected to the anger of the Palestinians stemming from their perceived disadvantages, and the ill fates that had befallen them. We had to listen to an awful lot of resentment of America expressed by Palestinians and by Americans of Palestinian descent--occasionally there would be Americans who would marry Palestinians and

they were among the most tiresome. We had Palestinians who worked for us in the Embassy without any problems. But this was not an issue in which I wanted to be engaged in for the rest of my life. I also did not want to spend my life in a culture which excluded women. Their absence in professional settings diminished life.

Among the American official and private communities in Lebanon, there was a wide spread of opinion about Israel. We had in Beirut the Arab training language facility, so that in addition to the Arabists on the Embassy staff, we also had about a dozen officers studying language and culture. The Army had a comparable facility at the American University; so there were also four or five Army officers--captains and majors--in Beirut studying language and culture. These students tended to identify themselves quite closely with Arab views on Middle East disputes. They were quite suspicious of Israel and in some cases, even hostile. Within the Embassy, there were some officers who had served in the Arab world for substantial periods of time, who were also suspicious of Israel and some were hostile. I had close Jewish friends and certainly a sympathy for Jewish people as a consequence of my upbringing. But although I fully understood and accepted the reason for a State of Israel, I at times felt that the Israelis behaved in a rather bullying manner.

When I went to Cameroon, I became acquainted with an Israeli diplomat who became one of my closest friends and is so today--we see each other and communicate on a regular basis. I have been to his son's Bar Mitzvah and he has been to my parents' and my brother's houses; so I would call it a close personal relationship. I jocularly told him, as we became better acquainted, that I considered myself a broad spectrum anti-Semite--I didn't want to get involved in the Middle East conflict because I saw Israelis and Arabs more alike than dissimilar. I speculated that they would fight for a long time and I would prefer not be in the middle of it.

Q: *That brings us into 1968. You then went from Lebanon to the Cameroon where you remained until 1970.*

JOHN R. COUNTRYMAN
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1966-1968)

Ambassador Countryman was born in New York and raised in New York and California. He was educated at Fordham University, Miami University and the Frei University of Berlin. After service in the US Navy he joined the Foreign Service in 1962. An Arab language speaker and Middle East specialist, Ambassador Countryman served abroad in Istanbul, Beirut, Dhahran, Tripoli, Libreville and Oman, where we was US Ambassador from 1981 to 1985. In his service in the State Department in Washington, he dealt primarily with Arab Peninsular affairs. Ambassador Countryman was interviewed by David Reuther in 2001.

Q: Well it is interesting. You are talking about having mentors and having some relationship with

the assignments type people which is not just cold and distant. The consul had obviously begun to make some assumptions about your talents and capabilities and was interested in encouraging you.

COUNTRYMAN: I found I think it was very informal. I found that the State Department counseling system, personnel system, was very good. It certainly treated me very well. I mean not just that I rose to be an ambassador but all along the way. It was sensitive and gave an ear to what I wanted and certainly gave me the tools of the profession. Skipping ahead here but, here I was going to Dhahran and after all the time out to take Arabic they sent me to Exxon Corporation which was a marvelous experience for three months training as preparation for being a petroleum attaché.

Q: So, at this time the Arabic language school is in Beirut.

COUNTRYMAN: That's right, in the Embassy. We also went to lectures and courses at AUB, the American University of Beirut. The British had a school up in the mountains called Shemlan that was for their British Foreign Service and businessmen. I mean you a person off the street could go to Shemlan. It was an Arabic training school, Arabic language, but also people in the British Foreign Office went there. The Foreign Office had a special course that was more intensive than the business man's course. So we exchanged both tests and lectures with them. So for 18 months I studied Arabic, Islamic law, and Arabic history. We had this little exchange. I would go up to Shemlan once in awhile and attend one of their lectures.

Q: Now I have taken Chinese. That was a year in Washington and a year in the field, but you are saying 18 months in the field.

COUNTRYMAN: Yes.

Q: Well now, what would be a daily routine?

COUNTRYMAN: Instruction was nine to about two or three. That is about all you could take in classes. It was an eight hour day because in the afternoon you were supposed to go home and listen to tapes, or go to the lab, and do your homework. Many times that time in the afternoon would be when you would go to AUB for a lecture. But it was nine to three I guess in the Embassy, and the Embassy had a special section with little rooms and places we could listen to tapes.

Q: So it wasn't off campus.

COUNTRYMAN: It was in the Embassy.

Q: Did people get pulled out from time to time to fill a hole in the consul section, were you guys pretty protected?

COUNTRYMAN: The agreement was, the ambassadors were very good at adhering to this, that we were attaches to the embassy, but that we were not to be pulled out. We were not to be used. Our full time job was the Arabic. We only pulled duty officer shifts. No one really minded that,

and it came up so infrequently, I think I had it once maybe. You would sit in the front office on Saturday or something. At night you were available on the phone.

Q: Who was in language training with you?

COUNTRYMAN: Bob Pelletreau, who later went on to be ambassador to Bahrain [March 1979-April 1980], Tunis [July 1987-May 1991], Cairo [September 1991-December 1993], and assistant secretary [February 1994-January 1997]. Joseph Twinam, who would be my boss in ARP (Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs) and Ambassador to Bahrain [June 1974-August 1976]. Eli Bizic who is now retired. I forget what his last post was. Peter Sutherland who was ambassador to Bahrain [July 1980-September 1983]. A couple of people from other agencies.

Q: So it was a very small group, 10 or so. Now this is not quite your third tour, you are five years in. Were the others equally young officers?

COUNTRYMAN: I think they had a little time on me. They were about my age, but I think they had been in longer, because I came in so late, and they had come in earlier.

Q: Now while you were there, the Arab-Israeli war breaks out in June '67. Does that impact on the school?

COUNTRYMAN: I arrived one day and the head of the school Harley Smith said, "What are you doing here? The school is closed. We are at war. Go upstairs and report to the DCM." So I reported to the DCM, and the decision had already been made to evacuate all Americans. So the Embassy was cut down very much. I was put in, not in charge, but I was given the responsibility of doing the phone calls and getting people out. Because the Ambassador hired literally 25-30 Pan Am planes (Pan American Airways) to come in and start taking people out. I was doing some of the admin things, getting buses there, making sure that people assembled at the right point. We were executing the pre-scripted Embassy evacuation plan.

Then temporarily I was taken off that and given another assignment. In a place like Beirut, the American Embassy was quite often the source of information for all other diplomats in the area. So there are an awful lot of other embassies there that, when the war broke out, received instructions from their capitals to go to the Americans and find out what is going on. So we had this deluge literally. It wasn't usually an ambassador but it could be a DCM or a first secretary who was seeking information on what is going on, can I have a briefing from you. So I was given a little office and a chair and a desk, and one after the other literally for a couple of days there, one after another, I was briefing these foreign diplomats about what was going on.

Q: Of course, you are the lieutenant and they are the general.

COUNTRYMAN: I didn't know. I had all these important looking documents and was saying we are doing this and we are doing that.

Then I remember being told, go to the econ section and burn their files. I toted up all the files and put them all in these huge 55 gallon drums, and the Marines dropped in thermite grenades and

these things burned away. It led to an erroneous report in the American press that the American embassy was in flames. Flames could be seen shooting from the roof of the American embassy. Then I was evacuated to Greece, because Americans from all over the Middle East, not just Beirut, were being evacuated.

The reception points for evacuees were two, Rome and Athens. So I was sent to Athens, and the embassy in Athens did a marvelous job in preparing the way and getting us places to live and so on and so forth. But I worked for them, helping them service Americans, particularly dependents around the Middle East.

Q: Now, an Arab-Israeli war is not an unfamiliar circumstance. So I would assume Athens had been through this before, although the last war was '56, about seven years earlier, right?

COUNTRYMAN: Again I think the embassy in Athens did a marvelous job. I mean they met us, they had buses hired, they met us at the airport. I was given a very nice little hotel to stay in, delivered there. Of course, there was the question of TDY. Money was handled well. They did a marvelous job. After awhile when things quieted down, the '67 war was over quite quickly. The embassy sent a special message to wherever, most of us I think were the Arabic language students were in Athens, but some went elsewhere. Word came back that we were to come back before other people. The reason was to literally be guinea pigs. We were back when the Embassy was still a skeleton staff. We were the first people that were brought back. Our job was to roam around Beirut and even into the countryside and see what the attitude was whether they were going to bring the rest of the Americans back. So being somewhat of a wise guy, the DCM was handling this, I turned to him and said, "Well if I don't come back, is that as good as a report that there is a problem out there?" He said, "No, John, use your discretion." But it was interesting, we did that. I went around and observed. All of us had been there long enough; at least I had been there long enough, so I had some Lebanese friends. There were certain areas. There were certain things without being clever about it, or using spy craft, or anything; I did my job, roamed around. I came back and did my report about what the attitudes were or the degree of control of the Lebanese government was, how the police were directing traffic, signs of demonstrations.

Q: So that meant you got in a car and drove out of Beirut?

COUNTRYMAN: Since my car had CD [consular, diplomatic plates] plates, I would use the car somewhat. I had a very unobtrusive car, a little Fiat 600. Do you remember that little car? Very unobtrusive car. But I used buses, or I would park the car someplace and then walk, or I would use a cab.

Q: What was your feeling? What did you determine about the hold of the Lebanese government?

COUNTRYMAN: That it was calm and that Americans could come back. There had been very few incidents before the evacuation, but of course that wasn't really a good measure because people had been evacuated so they weren't there for there to be incidents. As a matter of fact, there was one American who was very bitter about the evacuation, “As you see nothing happened.” Well yes, nothing happened because you weren't here. Suppose you had been here, maybe there would have been some problems. But, yes, just from talking to people. I went into the place where I used

to have my hair cut, a barbershop and I talked to people in there.

Q: In the evacuation itself did you also experience the phenomenon where missionaries or long-term businessmen aren't really willing to be evacuated?

COUNTRYMAN: We had people like that. We did have people who stayed. Our answer there is you have been given the opportunity. It is your choice. But it is being offered now, and probably won't be offered again not because we are being difficult, but it may not be possible. So you will evacuate now and take the flight at 5:15 tomorrow afternoon and if you say no, I will take you off the list. Very straight forward.

Q: How soon did you break off from the language training to go into petroleum attaché training?

COUNTRYMAN: I was assigned to Dhahran, to our Consulate General in Dhahran as head of the economic section. My tour in Beirut in the language school had been up some time like in August in the normal course of events. I was pulled out about a month early. I wasn't curtailed at all. Because the department…I didn't ask for this, but the department, again someone watching out for me, said we are going to send Countryman to be head of the economic section over there. In that role, his major responsibility is not just talking about the souk, the local market in eastern Saudi Arabia, it is going to be petroleum because he is going to be seeing…he will be our liaison with Aramco. Countryman doesn't know anything about petroleum. Most Foreign Service officers don't know anything about petroleum. We don't want to give him the full year-long petroleum officer program. Under that program a few people went to university. There were places which had good…I think Cal Tech or something like that, and there were a couple of people who went through this and then they also went to the companies.

But what they did for me is they literally hand created a program for me, a few months with Exxon. I think Exxon had also done a program, the full scale program, in cooperation with the university, but they hand created, hand tooled this program for me over at Exxon which was absolutely superb. So I came back like in June or July from Beirut, went directly…just passed through Washington, said Hello-Good-bye, took the Arabic exam, and they said we will see you in three or four months before you go out to Dhahran. Everything from there on in was handled by Exxon. I went very briefly to New York, to meet the president of Exxon and the senior people in Exxon headquarters, which was in Rockefeller Center. I was then sent to Houston to learn domestic operations and the basis of the oil industry. They taught me some geology. I sat down with an aging German professor who talked about organic material and these magnificent huge electron microscopes they had for looking at shale. I have had people who showed me how these reverberation thumpers, where they would drop a heavy weight on the ground and read seismic results from that to tell you where the strata were. I went out on one of these in the interior of Texas where they were doing it; went out to where they were pumping the oil. They assigned me to a Humble, which was Exxon's…Humble Oil Company was their Texas affiliate. I worked at a Humble gas station for two weeks. I pumped gas; had overalls on and put gas in the car and wiped people's windshields.

I learned the economics of it, prices at the pump, just learned everything about Humble's operation. They were very forthcoming and just treated me beautifully. I was there for about close to a month.

Then the next phase was to learn about terminal and refinery operations. Their big operation was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. So I went to Baton Rouge, spent about three or four weeks in Baton Rouge, went all through the refinery. I have forgotten 9/10ths of it, but I used to tell the difference between refining diesel, and gasoline and how you crack it and polymers, everything about that. Then the terminal, how the tankers unload and load and various sizes of tankers. I went on board a tanker. Went out to sea with a tanker and then came back on a launch. I went all over the tanker and saw how the stuff was stored. Of course, you always had to wear sneakers because you didn't want to touch anything and make a spark. There were certain places they could smoke. If you even carried cigarettes with you, you would be thrown overboard. The final, and what was probably the most interesting part, was six weeks in New York to learn the economics of petroleum. Those were the days when you heard a great deal about the posted price of petroleum. You don't hear about that anymore. Now it is just posted price negotiations between the producers and the…between the oil companies and the producing countries. Now, of course, OPEC just sets the price according to some complicated formula.

What happened was the petroleum industry had changed. You had what is called participation. In other words, in the old days we said we had a concession. I mean Aramco was a concession which was an agreement between Aramco and the Saudi government to extract oil from Saudi territory, and the Saudis really didn't own their own oil in a way by the terms of the concession. Then they had participation where the Saudis really owned the oil, and the oil company was simply a contractor to remove the oil. So that was a shift that occurred while I was in Dhahran,…that was to come.

NORMAN L. PRATT
Economic Counselor
Beirut (1967-1973)

Norman L. Pratt was born in New York in 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1937. He served in the U.S. Army from 1941-1946 and joined the Foreign Service at the end of 1946. His career included positions in Egypt, Libya, Germany, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, and South Africa. Mr. Pratt was interviewed in 1991 by Dayton Mak.

Q: *So you went over the mountain to Beirut and then?*

PRATT: We went over the mountain from Damascus to Beirut and to the Phoenecia Hotel. I had little trouble sleeping that night as I had been pretty busy. I was up early the next morning and went over to the Embassy and talked with the Chargé; Dwight Porter had already left by then. Adrian Middleton told me that...there were 39 of us exactly...the plane to take us to Rome had space for only 35. Two of the people who stayed behind were CIA communicators. I told him at the time that I would prefer to stay and would take the junior officer Gene Marshall and take him with me. I didn't want to leave the ball game until it was over. Also there were other considerations which made me feel it was best for me not to pull out.

Q: *So you didn't get to go to Rome or Athens?*

PRATT: No. I didn't get to go until weeks and weeks later. In the meantime the family had been in Rome and then went down to Capri, etc.

Q: *And leaving you in that terrible Beirut.*

PRATT: Right in the briar patch.

Q: *So, continue from there. You were, I believe, assigned to Beirut.*

PRATT: I stayed in Beirut until late July. It was interesting too because all of the Syrians that had stayed away from this very soon found out that I was still there; so I reestablished the acquaintanceships very rapidly. In fact, they were never really broken.

Q: *They sought you out in Beirut?*

PRATT: They sought me out in Beirut. I was in Beirut during the temporary period until I left in late July. I thought the most useful thing I could do was to try to develop sources of information as to what was going on in Syria.

Developing contacts to get an idea of what was going on in Syria was not too difficult. Physically Damascus and Beirut are less than 100 miles apart. The Damascenes who I had known and who had stayed away from me the last days in Syria because of fear of the attention of the Syrian intelligence were only too glad to see me in Beirut. One of my close friends who had deliberately asked me to stay away from him showed up three weeks after the war in Beirut. He treated me to one of the finest lunches I have ever had at the hotel in full view of everyone. And, of course, there were other Syrians who had gone down to Beirut in the years previously that I was able to see and talk with.

Q: *So in a way you had more contacts with Syrians there than you had had in Damascus in recent days.*

PRATT: That is correct. I know the morning I came down to Beirut in June, I saw more people that morning to talk with on developments than I had been able to see in the months previously in Syria. Plus there was an assortment of daily newspapers always available, which I used for reporting to Washington.

Q: *Do you recall what was happening in Syria while you were away?*

PRATT: During the period I was away it was first of all...in the outgrowth of the war, itself, it was the reserve forces basically that were defending Syria on the Golan Heights. The crack Syrian groups, were kept in Damascus to protect the regime.

Q: *Were they Alawite or something else?*

PRATT: They were probably basically Alawite, although the complete Alawite domination did not really take effect for another year or two.

One of the things I was able to accomplish was...I had a commercial assistant named Abraham Keen. He had been in the United States during the war for an indoctrination training course. He was a local employee, a Lebanese national, although he lived in Damascus. He also had an admirable talent for developing information as to what was happening. He was enormously valuable as a source of information during my time in Damascus. He still had his contacts there when he came back to Beirut that allowed him to continue to develop this information. I was able to have him put on the Beirut payroll. He returned on a Friday and started to work on a Monday. The sad thing is that the continuing pressures he was under during the years in Syria had affected his heart and by November he had died of a heart attack.

There is a gap in my recollection because from late July until November I was out of the Middle East and back in Washington, nominally on the Egyptian Desk although it boiled down to about four weeks there, home leave and then some briefings for my return to Beirut.

The developments in Syria during this point were not terribly significant. The regime had managed to hold on primarily because of its military strength, its control through its intelligence and police. A great factor in all of this was the old ruling class in Syria. The entrepreneurs who had done the economic development had never considered the army as significant. Therefore, none of their sons ever became military officers. As one put it very bluntly, "We let the army get away with it from us."

Q: *So the army was sort of an under class?*

PRATT: The army started out as an under class, particularly with the Alawites. This group lived up in the hills beyond Latakia and in the valley around Homs. They were poor peasants with little chance for advancement or education, except through military schools. As the minority they found favor with the French Mandate with the Mandate authorities. They were encouraged to become non-coms and eventually go to officers' candidate school at Homs. Thus they emerged as a military cast devoted primarily to their own Alawite interests.

The Alawite are orthodox Muslim about which we know not terribly much. Their dogma is pretty much concealed and considered secret. Their poverty as peasants showed up particularly because they were the tenant farmers for the wealthy, Sunni Muslims, and the conditions under which the Alawite lived was not very good. There was a study done on rural hygiene back in the '30s which described it vividly. Thus when you get into situations like the one in the mid-'80s where you had the Sunni uprising in Hama against Alawite and the Baath Party, and the subsequent government bloody reprisals and suppression of the revolt, it is understandable that this is basically the working out of the Alawite antagonism against the Sunni landlord.

Q: *I gather the Alawite were not a merchant class?*

PRATT: They were not a merchant class, but basically poor peasants. One of the things that was

done was that the daughters were almost auctioned off into slavery to the wealthy households in Damascus and Beirut where they would go to work for pittance for years on end. This started at the age of 10 or 12, or even younger.

Q: *Do you think the Alawites had a built in resentment against the rest of the...?*

PRATT: They had a built in resentment against the rest of the Syrian world.

Q: *Doesn't that make for a very severe fragmentation in the Damascus scene or the Syrian scene?*

PRATT: It does make a fragmentation on the Syrian scene but at the same time you have to remember the Syrian system of control with night arrests by the G-2, the military presence, etc.

Q: *It sounds a bit like a communist system that could break up and go smash all of a sudden.*

PRATT: Well, whether the system could go smash all of a sudden or not, I don't know. The Baath Party started out with socialist ideas with nationalization, without compensation despite promises, etc. They have done something that Syria did not know during the period of the merchant classes. They brought a degree of political stability to the country.

Back in Beirut, November 1967. I was in charge of the economic section there with the usual responsibilities connected with a large American business community and specialized problems such as the American position on the recovery of the defunct Intra Bank. The Syrian aspect of it was very much of a sideline. But it was always with me because for one thing I had a steady stream of our local employees coming down from Damascus seeking advise, help, etc. Some of their stories from a personal basis were not terribly happy. I remember the Ambassador's housekeeper came down showing up at the office one morning with a story that she had been arrested. She had stayed on as housekeeper of the residence that we owned in Syria. She had been arrested by the Syrian G-2 with Syrian pounds and working clothes and taken down to the G-2 and held until 6 in the evening and then put in a taxi back to Beirut as she was a Lebanese national Armenian. Her case was easy to solve. We hired her for ourselves having known her well.

Insofar as keeping in touch with Syrian affairs was concerned, through some of the people that I had known there it was possible to follow events in the broad outline fairly successfully. At the same time, the Italians who were protecting our interests in Damascus made regular visits to the Embassy in Beirut to discuss various problems that they had with our properties there. While in Beirut they filled us in on the developments as they saw them in Syria.

At that time it was completely forbidden for any American to be issued a permit to enter Syria. This situation continued for well over a year. When Americans did have special reasons to go to Syria it was a long an elaborate rigmarole they had to go through to get a visa. However, the Italians felt a year and a half later, late September, 1968 that the events had moved to a stage where it might be possible for an American representative to return to Damascus on the grounds that they needed help in the affairs of our Embassy there.

Q: *Before you go on could you give us some idea of what our interests were? What were the things*

that they had to protect that were important to us?

PRATT: Basically our property. We had an Embassy building there that we owned. We owned the Ambassador's Residence, which is one of the three or four private houses in all of Damascus because almost everyone else lived in apartments. We also had a large plot of ground on which the school sat -- the American community school. Those were our three major concerns.

We also had financial interests there in blocked funds. We had certain AID loans that the Syrians were servicing regularly. As well as blocked PL 480 money. Blocked in the sense that no disposition had been made of them.

On this I was helped by the fact that in March, 1967, before the war, I had arranged for the AID files to go to the AID mission in Athens because we had closed our office in Damascus. I was able to recover those files from Athens and keep them in Beirut for reference purposes. They had the detailed background of the technical aspects of AID matters.

There was the legal question of the property on which the school sat...a thick file. It had a lot of classified material in it but only related to the title. Although it was a classified file, during the evacuation in 1967, the admin officer merely wrote declassified and the date across the cover of the file and turned the whole file over to the Italians.

Q: *Did the Italians do a pretty good job of protecting our interests?*

PRATT: I think they did an excellent job of protecting our interests. They had an officer, Luigi Conte who moved into the Embassy building and retained a staff of seven or eight of our most experienced locals, particularly on the administrative side. His successor, Mario Matolini, who I got to know well over two or three years following, was equally conscientious.

There was, of course, a difference in approach to the local employees. The Italians were much more formal in their dealings with them than we were. Nevertheless, I think things worked out reasonably well. I came out of this operation with a considerable respect for the caliber of the Italian Foreign Service.

Q: *Now, are you ready to turn to your responsibilities in Beirut? You mentioned the Intra Bank and I am sure there were lots of other peculiar affairs going on there.*

PRATT: Intra Bank. A long and complicated history. Basically the builder of the bank was a Palestinian. He built a very successful bank in the sense that if you came to him he made a point of giving good service. His difficulty, of course, was that he was too frequently using the bank's funds for long range non-liquid loans. There was no long-term capital market as such in Lebanon. At the same time he, as a Palestinian, was rather disliked by the native Lebanese bankers. I must say that banking was a major Lebanese preoccupation there being some, I guess, 60-odd banks in various stages of operation in Lebanon, including a number of American banks -- the major American banks.

Q: *Didn't the Intra Bank have a connection that was particularly important to us as Americans?*

PRATT: Yes. When Intra Bank went belly up in 1966 it put us in a difficult position because Intra Bank had taken deposits of some US$15 million as a result of PL 480 sales. Thus the US Commodity Credit Corporation was a creditor to the bank for that amount. It became imperative that we do what we could to recover these funds. Because of the importance of the bank to the entire economic structure of Lebanon, efforts were organized to attempt refloating, restructuring the bank. The mechanism for doing this was to set up a board of directors with representatives of the Lebanese government, Lebanese private banking, as well as representatives of certain other Middle East countries, notably Qatar. The American representation was from the American Commodity Credit Corporation. The descending order of precedence there starting with their representatives who were basically in Washington. Then Embassy staff, starting with the agricultural attaché and working down to the economic chief and his assistant. In point of fact this meant that it came to the economic chief and his assistant to carry the day to day operations because the Washington people were tied up with other affairs.

At the same time, there was an involvement with an American advisory firm, Kidder Peabody, to try to get the bank reopened. This really became complicated because as the board decided on a multiple range of questions such as what to do about the bank's building on Fifth Avenue in New York? It owned 65 percent of the Middle East Airlines, which was in the process of modernization. Thus we found ourselves debating not only the sale of the bank in New York, but also whether or not Middle East Airlines should buy Boeing 707 or go for British planes. And at the same time try to figure out a way to bring the banking operations back into paying and reimbursing the various depositors one way or another.

The decision was eventually taken to buy the 707s, much to everybody's relief in the Embassy. In that we had a major source of funding from Ex-Im Bank in Washington.

Q: *As I recall, Yusuf Beidas, or whatever his name was, died in Latin American somewhere, didn't he?*

PRATT: I think so, yes.

Q: *So we never heard much more...*

PRATT: He disappeared from the scene in 1966. He got on a plane one evening without saying goodby and that was it.

Q: *What else was there was interest in Lebanon?*

PRATT: Well, let's see. Other matters that became of interest were...we got into hijacking of aircraft. I had a civil air attaché, Len Dworr, on the staff and I seemed to have gotten involved because he was a regional type and was off in Calcutta or some place else selling our planes. The first hijacking was a TWA 707 into Damascus and got complicated by the fact that there were two Israelis aboard the plane. The plane was originally supposed to go to Tel Aviv. The Syrians grabbed the Israelis, wouldn't turn them loose. At that point the TWA people said that they would keep the plane in Damascus until the Israelis were turned loose. They had that responsibility to

their passengers. It went on for three months when finally the Syrians that the Israelis had as prisoners turned up and the Israelis went away and the plane flew out and everybody was happy.

In the meantime I had the Red Cross from Geneva and an Italian representative from Damascus in the office. At 1 or 2 in the morning consultations between the two of us were held up in a hotel because it was easier for him to get over from Damascus.

The involvement with the Middle East Airlines through Intra Bank took another form. One December day the Israelis decided to retaliate for some terrorism somewhere by descending on Beirut airport and destroying some aircraft. They blew up three or four of them. The next morning there was a meeting jointly of the Intra Bank board and the MEA board. I still remember the report by the chairman which said, "We were able to resume operations because one plane was fortunately out of the country; so we combined the London and Paris flights. Everybody showed up who was booked and we were able to make the flight as scheduled. Incidentally, we are fully covered with insurance and this will make the down payment on the new fleet that we need."

Q: *The Lebanese seem to manage to come out on all four feet.*

PRATT: Yes. A side note of irony...an Israeli insurance company instead of Lloyds was one of the people who had to pay up. It also had the affect of putting the competing Lebanese Airline out of business because they had lost a couple of planes but had been so sure of themselves that they didn't bother with insurance. They went bankrupt.
This in many respects strengthen MEA and our position on Intra Bank because it made MEA the one national passenger carrier.

Q: *What do you remember about the problems of the diversion of the various waters in Lebanon? As I remember the Lebanese were trying to divert water that would ordinarily flow into Israel to keep it from going there. Was that a problem for you at all?*

PRATT: No that was not a problem for me. This was primarily pre-1967. They got control of a lot of the area where the water flowed.

Q: *Well, you were there during the time when the real build up of the PLO and other organizations in the south Lebanon was going on. Can you tell us something about that?*

PRATT: Not terribly much. They were building up there then, but I would have to go back to the records of that period because it was more a matter for the political section than for me.

Q: *As I remember, Beirut was changing very rapidly during that period. Beirut had been a rather calm, pleasant place where one could talk to people when suddenly you had these armed people marching around the streets being rather unattractive.*

PRATT: Yes. It brought out the fact that there was in Beirut this well-to-do upper crust living in Paris fashions and skiing at the Cedars, etc., and this massive proletariat, which was really not considered of any significance except when they had their periodic parliamentary elections and their vote was sought. This clash often confused the foreigners who visited because they could see

the glitter of the St. Georges and Phoenicia, but the refugee camps outside the city were not too visible from the road. They failed to see that great gap, which was a major factor, I think, in the civil war. As well as the fact that all the religious groupings were at each others throats even in those days.

DAVID E. ZWEIFEL
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1967)

Ambassador David E. Zweifel was born in Colorado in 1934 and graduated from Oregon State University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1963 after serving in the U.S. Navy overseas. His Foreign Service career included positions in Rio de Janeiro, Beirut, Amman, Mexico City, Muscat, and an ambassador to Yemen. Ambassador Zweifel was interviewed in 1996 by Thomas Dunnigan.

Q: *After two years in Personnel, in 1967, you were assigned to language training in Beirut. How did this come about?*

ZWEIFEL: Again, going back to my service in the Navy, I had spent time in the Mediterranean, visited the Middle East briefly, had become intrigued with the area. I also had done some reading and study on the area. And I had a mentor in Bob Houghton, an Arabist who had spent the major part of his career in the Middle East. He encouraged me in that direction. It was a close call. I had enjoyed my time in Brazil tremendously, met and married my wife there. But I thought that I should try an alternate area before making a long term career commitment. As it turned out, the Arabic language training was the prelude to over seventeen years spent in the Middle East or, in Washington, work devoted to developments in that area.

Q: *Tell me a little bit about the Beirut language training. Do they train you in all forms of Arabic, or one Eastern, Western - how do they do that?*

ZWEIFEL: At the time, we had two Arabic language training programs, one in Tangier focused on Western or Maghrebi Arabic and the one in Beirut which I attended. That program was based on modern written Arabic. The spoken Arabic we learned was a Levantine dialect, probably the most widely useful across the Arab world apart from North Africa. Colloquial Arabic was being greatly shaped and influenced by Gamal Abdul Nasser, the preeminent leader in the Arab World, he was a voluble, forceful speaker, listened to by all strata of Arab societies. This meant that there was a certain "Egyptianization" of the language.

Q: *How many pupils were you in that Arabic class?*

ZWEIFEL: There were students at several stages going through, a continuous flow. The pupils were State officers, those from the Agency, USIS, etc. It was an inter-agency program of instruction. As I recall, there were probably a total of 20-22 at that time. The numbers were somewhat reduced after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

Q: *Yes, I wanted to ask you about the Mideast War, what affect that had on your training.*

ZWEIFEL: It had a lot of effect on me personally. When the war broke out on Monday, June 5, 1967, FSI classes were immediately suspended. The Ambassador and staff realized that they had these extra bodies, the idled students. Again, as a comment on how fast things move and how quixotically we tend to fall back on plans in times of emergency, it was decided that we students would be pressed into service. The Embassy's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) called for mailing advisories to resident Americans in times of crisis.

Q: *Mailing them out?*

ZWEIFEL: Yes. That first afternoon, we FSI students were put to work stuffing envelopes with these cautionary letters. I don't think any of them ever actually were posted. Event; moved so fast that, by the time we had finished stuffing the envelops, the decision had been made for a full-scale evacuation. All Americans were advised (over BBC, VOA, etc.) to leave Lebanon if possible. Ever since, I have been extremely skeptical about the efficacy of the EAP process. In most instances, it should be one of the first documents destroyed. I have never known of a case in which those managing a crisis have had time to peruse the thick documents we have mandated.

The first night of the war, it was decided that we should destroy classified and sensitive documents. The process involved lugging the papers up to the roof of the building - the self-same chancery destroyed several years later in the awful car-bomb attack. There, we put them into "burn barrels" and ignited the lot. The fires lit up the night skies in the otherwise blacked-out city. Many Lebanese contended that we were signaling the Israelis. Nonsense, of course.

Q: *No shredding machines in those days?*

ZWEIFEL: We had shredders, but not of sufficient capacity to handle the volume of material. Meanwhile, an "Operations Center" of sorts had been established at the Embassy. I was to stand a six-hour watch there starting at six o'clock Tuesday morning. When that time was up, the officer who was supposed to replace me just was not able to function. So I stayed on throughout the afternoon. I got home that night briefly to get a suitcase. My wife and infant son had already been evacuated, along with the other dependents and many members of the staff.

Wednesday came. The Lebanese had asked our very able Ambassador, Dwight Porter, to leave. They did not declare him Persona Non Grata, but rather just let it be known that it would be better if he were out of the country for a time.

The last evacuation plane, the one which would transport the Porters, was to leave that afternoon, and I planned to be on it. Just as I was ready to go to the lobby, Ed Djerejian, then the Ambassador's Staff Aide, came to me and said "The Ambassador wants you to stay". So I was attached to the Embassy's "hard core" residual staff while all my FSI colleagues and their families spent the next six weeks on the beaches in Italy and Greece. My wife and son were among them. Meanwhile I was stuck in Beirut. FSI management did take pity on me. After the school was reopened they, in essence, said "poor Dave. He needs a break". So they let me take two weeks'

annual leave - at my expense - to get a breather.

Q: *Well, that's very generous! Tell me, Dave, was there any real fighting that the Lebanese did in the '67 War?*

ZWEIFEL: The Lebanese were only marginally engaged. The only serious disturbances in Beirut came on the Saturday after the fighting was over. That was the day on which Nasser briefly offered his resignation. That led to wide-spread street demonstrations. There was a lot of railing against the Americans, seen as surrogates of the victorious Israelis.

Q: *In Beirut?*

ZWEIFEL: Yes. Cars were burned, including a number of vehicles belonging to the Embassy staff. Windows were broken and that sort of thing, but no real fighting or any very widespread violence. None of our personnel were injured.

Q: *I know, but those were tense days and one never knew what was going to happen next. After your completion of the language training, and after this adventure during the '67 War, you went in 1968 to Amman.*

ZWEIFEL: I arrived at the beginning of 1969. One result of the Six Day War was that the market for Arabists was drastically reduced. Many of our embassies and other posts in the areas were closed as host governments broke diplomatic relations with Washington. A few were kept functioning as "interests sections" under friendly flags, but even in those cases, with reduced American presence. So there were few job openings for those of us who were coming out of training at the time. I was among those who faced a pretty bleak prospect. Even though I had by then determined I wanted to specialize as a political officer, I was assigned to a consular position.

An interesting footnote: in November, 1968, my wife and I drove to Amman. We were already assigned and wanted to look for housing, etc. As I recall, we were the first official Americans who were allowed back through Syria after the war. The Syrians were very hospitable. They treated us with real courtesy, even though the government in Damascus had broken relations with the U.S.

ARTHUR A. HOUGHTON III
Arabic Language Study, American University of Beirut
Beirut (1968-1969)

Mr. Houghton was born and raised in New York City and educated at Harvard University and the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. After Arabic language study in Lebanon, Mr. Houghton joined the Foreign Service and in 1966 and was posted to Amman, Jordan. Specializing in Middle East Affairs, Mr. Houghton served in Cairo, Egypt, as well as in the Department of State and in the National Security Council in Washington. He was a Pearson Fellow on Capitol Hill and served as Special Assistant to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Mr. Houghton was

interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: AUB, you were in AUB?

HOUGHTON: Yes, I was at AUB for one year between '65 and '66, one summer to the next.

Q: What was AUB like? That's American University of Beirut. What was it like at that time?

HOUGHTON: In what sense?

Q: Well, in the first place, sort of the mix in the faculty?

HOUGHTON: Well, the faculty was a mixture of American and Palestinian, Lebanese and others. Most of them were capable people who'd gone through courses of study in the United States or at the American University itself. I was given to a Lebanese, a Shiite Lebanese, named Nebi Ferz, a very fine man, who was very interested in the history of the Middle East, and I pursued my course of studies under his guidance. I wrote my dissertation on the American engagement with the issue of Palestine in the Wilsonian period immediately after World War I. It was a wonderful place to study, of course. Beirut is a lovely place to be, interesting. One had the ability to either use one's Arabic or not, at least in the city, while in the country you could at least have the opportunity to practice one's colloquial language. The library was adequate, not great but adequate, and generally speaking there was enough to keep one as busy as one wanted to there.

Q: What about the student body?

HOUGHTON: Mixed student body, a limited number of Americans undergraduate, very limited number of Americans undergraduate; now, at the graduate level the largest number of people taking courses in Near Eastern studies were Americans such as myself.

Q: By this time was AUB sort of on the – I don't want to say the black list, but no longer teaching the future Arabic leaders and all?

HOUGHTON: Oh, no, I think it was. The alternate universities for young Arabs in Lebanon were very limited. There was the St. Joseph's University, which is principally French, or Lebanese University, which was not considered very good. There was no alternative American course of study in the Middle East, except for the American University of Cairo, but that was much more Egyptianized. Egypt had its own sort of problem with respect to other Arab countries in that it was highly politicized under the Nasser regime and a lot of families around Egypt didn't want to send their kids there. The big wave of Arab and other Middle Eastern students who decided that they really could go to the United States to learn hadn't occurred at that time, and so AUB was still a major event and an extremely desirable university for certain people to send their children to. Since the children frequently came from elites of countries in the Middle East, they returned to the elites and continued to play a leadership role.

Q: How was Nasserism playing at that time?

HOUGHTON: Loudly. This was in the early 1960s, early to mid 1960s, and the general sort of sense was that, if Nasser wanted to bring people out into the streets of almost any country in the Middle East, he could do it. In Lebanon there is this sort of mixed interplay of foreign influences and pressures both on the Lebanese government as well as within sort of the social and demographic structure of Lebanon itself. There were groups that were Nasserist, there were groups that were pro-Iraqi, there were groups that were financed by the Kuwaitis and Saudis, as well as by, of course, the United States and others. The Soviets were in there with both feet. It was a great place to be to see this interplay of different political factions.

Q: What was the civil war that was going on in '58? What was that all about? Do you know?

HOUGHTON: I came to the Middle East after the '58 war. The '58 war really was a collision of nationalist influences and political plays by major states such as Syria and Lebanon, and Egypt in other countries of the Middle East, and Iraq the overthrow of the king, the monarchy, in a bloody coup, and the establishment of an Arab nationalist regime there, which then sought to play itself against the others. It was a period of intense turmoil which then appeared to be extraordinarily threatening to certain groups in Lebanon. They then called for our assistance among others, but were also prepared to take up arms to promote their own particular cause such as Christians in Lebanon, Muslim nationalists as well as Druze, a separate group within Lebanon itself, which you know about, and it all sort of collided in the early summer of 1958.

Q: While you were there in '65-'66 were the waters placid by this time?

HOUGHTON: The surface waters were placid, but there was a great sense of sort of turmoil underneath. Lots of different things were going on. You still had external influence to one degree or the other coming from many, many quarters and many countries inside Lebanon itself. You had an increasing division between, on one hand, a Muslim community divided between Sunni Muslims and Shiites against the tradition overlords of Lebanon themselves, deeply concerned about their own position within Lebanon, continued to dominate basically the politics of the country. And the memory of the war was still there. You could pass through mountain villages that had been shelled. There was a certain amount of physical destruction that had taken place during the course of the '58 war. There were towns that had been exclusive Druze, for example, or exclusively Muslim that had resisted attacks by Christians or vice versa, and the memories were all there. One didn't talk much about them. Lebanon is a country where there are from time to time certain subjects one does not discuss. The nature of the war, the reasons for the civil war, what was finished or what was unfinished were subjects that one didn't raise with the Lebanese, normally speaking. I was a student, which meant that I had to be reasonably guarded in terms of what my apparent interests were so that I not be suspected of being something else, an informer for the United States, in the intelligence service of another country, etcetera. There's always that sort of suspicion: What are you here to learn Arabic for? Why are you interested in us? What are you here to learn our culture and history for other than to inform your government and find other ways to exert control on the part of the United States over our lives? It's a very standard sort of traditional view in the Middle East. If the conspiracy isn't overt, then it must be covert, and exist.

Q: In your getting around, did you find that the Shiite minority or something was sort of overlooked at that time?

HOUGHTON: Well, the question as to were the Shiites a minority is an interesting question demographically. Who knows? There was never a census. Censuses were deliberately avoided.

Q: There was a census in 1930 or something like that?

HOUGHTON: It was in the '40s that the census was taken. But the Christians held onto a census figure that placed them in the majority even though at that time they were probably moving toward below the 50 percent mark. Within the Muslim communities Shiites were probably the largest number, but one didn't talk. It was a dirty little secret. If the Shiites were the largest number, they were nevertheless the most impoverished both economically as well as politically, and they could lump it.

Q: Was it a group that in a way you almost had to be careful not to get too involved with, that this would raise suspicions?

HOUGHTON: Lots of groups one wanted to avoid. Frequently one would run into Lebanese and others in Lebanon including Palestinians who wanted to enlist someone else to their cause for the support of what they themselves were interested in. You had an interesting job avoiding that kind of entanglement.

Q: What about Israel? Did you get early recognition of Israel...?

HOUGHTON: I don't think anybody mentioned Israel. It was still called Occupied Palestine at the time, and even to mention the word 'Israel' was to push a hot button.

Q: Did you sense among, say, the Americans who were taking Arabic the accusation which I think may come from sort of Israelis sources, certainly within the American Foreign Service connotation: if you were an Arabist ipso facto you were anti-Semitic. This was sort of thrown out at one time or another. Was that around at all?

HOUGHTON: Sure, absolutely. I think behind it you have a situation where young Americans who went to Beirut or to the Middle East to learn, study, or work and who had not gone to Israel and had no special interest in Israel itself were exposed to influences that came from principally Arab sources, entirely Arab sources. The result was that one's view of the Middle East and the Middle East problem was almost entirely by experience on one side of a bipolar issue. One would find one's friends, in discussion with one's friends, frequently the discussion came out as to what to do with the Middle East problem and what to do with the Middle East issue. In many cases people would voice views that would certainly look to Israelis or to Israeli supporters as if they were pro-Arab and anti-Israel. One didn't deal with issues of anti-Semitism. You know, an accusation of anti-Semitism won't come from an Arab; it will come from somebody who is either Israeli or Jewish or is a supporter of either of those particular positions. You didn't get that in Beirut. I had two good friends in Beirut – actually they were rather adventurous – a young couple who were Jewish and they wanted to see what it was like so they planted themselves there and studied at the American University of Beirut. I wonder what's ever become of them. Both of them were interested in this and they had a fascination with the Arab side of the equation because they

knew the other. They'd been to Israel, they had lived in Jewish communities in the United States, and were themselves Jewish. So that was part of it, but nobody ever raised the issue of anti-Semitism there at that time.

Q: Did you have any contact with the American embassy or language officers or anything like that?

HOUGHTON: Sure, absolutely, we ran into them from time to time.

Q: Was this part of your future plan? Were you thinking of ARAMCO or academic world?

HOUGHTON: No, I was interested in the Department of State, probably from an early point after I had arrived in Lebanon. I had the exposure to an offer from the US government from the Agency, CIA, that did not materialize. My interest in national service, national military service, which had been frustrated, nevertheless continued to hold a residue of interest for me in terms of national service in some other manner, and I was interested in the State Department as a possible future job even as I was going through Arabic in the early stages.

Q: Had you made any approach to the State Department at that time?

HOUGHTON: In the first year that I went out to Beirut, I studied Arabic there and I made no approach to the State Department. I occasionally would talk to people who were at the embassy. For example, at a reception or another social event one ran into embassy officers, consular officers and others, and one recognized that they did embassy things whatever they were, but we didn't see a great deal of it. At the same time, I went to a British school. It was a British foreign office school, and the British foreign office school was peopled by young people from the British foreign office who themselves were going to go and do embassy things. It was the national interest in the political interplay and in what the British were doing, what the Soviets were doing, even what the Americans were doing, and so one was exposed to that at that particular point. At the end of that year, I was in Washington for a month or so and I went down to see the Board of Examiners to find out what it meant to apply for the Foreign Service. I had already taken the Foreign Service written exam – don't ask me when, because I don't remember when that was – but whoever it was in the Board of Examiners said, "Why don't you take the oral? I think we have a slot for you. Come and see us next Monday." I said I wasn't prepared, I hadn't done anything, I hadn't thought about it a great deal, and he said, "Oh, go ahead. You may pass it. Who knows? See where you are." So I did, and I didn't pass the oral that time. It was one of those moments where I took the advice, but nevertheless that wasn't the block, because I was going back to the Middle East to the American University in any case.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

HOUGHTON: Yes, I do. Thank you for the question. There were a number of questions with respect to, obviously, me personally, obviously about my comprehension of foreign affairs, about my experience in the Middle East. Then I was given sort of a set of spot questions that went to things like "What was the name of the inn where John Wilkes Booth hid up after he'd assassinated Lincoln?" I couldn't answer that question, and there were a series of others that were of that sort of

American history trivia that gave me a deep negative on what my understanding of my own country was about. In the view of the Foreign Service examiners, it was perfectly clear to them in any event that I needed to be able to represent the United States and to answer questions of a probing and profound nature from those people I would be coming in contact with abroad who would be very interested in all of this. Between you and me, I never found anybody ever interested at that level of American history or anything other than why America conducts its policy as it does today – "Don't tell me about last year." I thought at the time it was fair, but looking backward I thought it was a misperception, I think willful misperception, of what other people would be interested in on the part of the United States, the sort of evangelical aspect of us: "Well, we have so much to tell you about our democracy that you must want to know about it." No, it doesn't happen that way.

Q: Not at all. Then you went back....

HOUGHTON: To AUB, and I went there for a year, took a course of Middle Eastern studies, Arab world studies, and got my master's degree at the end of that year.

Q: When did you get your master's degree?

HOUGHTON: It would have been in the summer of 1966.

Q: Was there any feeling at the time that all hell was going to break loose again in the Middle East at some point? I'm talking about the Arab-Israeli side of things.

HOUGHTON: To the extent that I personally paid attention to it, it seemed to me, I'm sure, that the underlying tensions and the sense of grievance would at some point build up toward some kind of a conflict, but who knows what form it would take.

Q: It's often interesting that Lebanon was never really, although it suffered probably more than any other state. You've got Syria and Egypt, which really have carried on the brunt of the fighting, where the Lebanese have sort of been passive – I won't say bystanders – and get beaten up from time to time. Did you find within Lebanon that lots of Lebanese were saying, "Let's go get those Israelis" or something like that?

HOUGHTON: Most Lebanese I met would have said.... Well, they fell into two groups. There were Christian Lebanese who would have said and were telling me, "You know, we're really much more like the Israelis than most Arabs recognize. We're friends of the Israelis." That's all they were doing, saying, "We're not like other Arabs and we're not like Muslims, and we don't like them much, and that's their problem, not ours." Younger Muslim Lebanese, many of them, were pretty Palestinianized; that is, they had the sense of grievance and oppression that many Palestinians did about the occupation of Palestine by Israel with the feeling somehow that there was an enormous grievance that needed to be redressed somehow.

Q: How did the Arab world strike you? Of course, you were in – I hate to use the term – one of the most civilized. Lebanon was a civilized country compared, without the deep problems, say, of Syria or Egypt or Saudi Arabia. Were you getting any feel that you were studying the language by

people who really weren't making much of what they had; in other words, that the Arabs didn't seem to be, in your perception or your thinking, moving ahead within the 20th century as compared to, say, Europeans or the Israelis or Americans?

HOUGHTON: I'm sure I didn't think about it in that manner. Probably what impressed me the most was I was in a region of a single overlying culture called Arab, mostly Islamic, and, to one degree or another, entirely Arabic speaking and, to one degree or another, feeling themselves to be Arab but at dramatically different levels of cultural development within that region. Some were very tribal, for example Jordan or Saudi Arabia, and others were reaching toward being a more modern society with terrible problems achieving that and riven by political divisions and by a certain degree of anarchy that made it almost impossible for them to be compared to European states of a more traditional nature. Of course, we've found, haven't we, that certain European countries, particularly in the Balkans, break down in much the same way?

Q: Yes, absolutely. Were you getting any feeling personally about American policy towards the Middle East? If you're in the Arab world, you get hit over the head by our fairly strong support of Israel, which became more pronounced later, which didn't seem to very even handed. Was this a concern of yours?

HOUGHTON: It seemed to me that American policy was fairly even handed. What seemed to be the American policy pursued American interests, and American interests in the Middle East were principally in oil stability and the pursuit of oil, and that meant keeping the Arab-Israeli issue as quiet as it could be with the understanding or recognition that the United States wasn't going to do much to change its posture of extremely strong support at that time for Israel. That's the way it would have appeared at the time if I had managed to sit down and articulate it that way. There's no strong question as to whether the United States was even handed; it probably was not, nor did it purport to be – no, that's not true; it did purport to be.

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Q: How about Lebanon when you went back there? What was it like?

HOUGHTON: Well, it was more troubled surely. The issue of what Palestinians were was extremely visible in Lebanon. Nasserism had receded, it seemed to me, and the influence of other countries was evidently less, but the state within a state that was growing, that is the Palestinian entity within Lebanon itself and the sense of Palestinian consciousness had grown and the Palestinians were already becoming something of a challenge to the Lebanese government even then. This was '68-'69.

Q: Building up to Black September in Jordan...

HOUGHTON: That was further on. That was in Jordan.

Q: ...in '70, but what I'm saying is that the '67 war had also displaced a significant number of Palestinians...

HOUGHTON: And Lebanese from the south as well.

Q: ...and Lebanese from the south as well.

HOUGHTON: Lebanon was no longer, it seemed to me, sort of a calm, sleepy place, not an easy place to be. It was a lot more political in the sense of nervousness and apprehension of things going on around Lebanon, that is, the possible reemergence of a '67 war again. In 1968 Lebanon was still formally at war with Israel, Syria was still formally at war with Israel, Egypt was, and Israel was not inclined to be reluctant to take the initiative, military initiative, if necessary in order to make a point in any of these countries, and did. There were Israeli overflights regularly and continuously and aerial dogfights that took place over the Golan Heights on a continuing basis. There was more disruption and convulsion that was taking place.

Q: How'd you find doing things the State Department way as opposed to the AUB way in learning the language?

HOUGHTON: I did what I needed to do to get the master's at AUB. The State Department was, you know, a professional organization professionally organized with certain expectations of what you needed to do in order to be able to fulfill the requirements of other people in whatever the job was, and that's the way a professional, it seemed to me, should be, and I accepted it.

Q: Did Arabic come back pretty quickly?

HOUGHTON: The Arabic grammar that I'd been given before came back very quickly. The year that I spent in Beirut at the language school improved that, improved my use of the language for colloquial purposes but also dramatically built up my vocabulary, which was helpful.

Q: Were you part of a class, or were you sort of by yourself?

HOUGHTON: No, there were three of us who came in together.

Q: Who were they?

HOUGHTON: David Ransom, David Mack and myself. We were part of a three-person class that came in at the same time.

Q: Well, you represent then a third of this trio that I've interviewed. The three of you ended up as being quite good in Arabic, weren't you?

HOUGHTON: I think all of us came out with a 4, 4+ in some cases. I think I came out at least as well as the other two. I think David Mack had the most opportunity in Libya to use it, so he was fortunate in that regard. I went on after that to Amman, Jordan, where it was useful but then to Egypt, when it atrophied.

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Q: What about Lebanon? Were they recovering by this point from the civil war?

HOUGHTON: By the time I went into Lebanon in 1995, they were certainly recovering from the civil war and have continued to do so. They were beginning to build Beirut back up again in a magnificent manner. A company that was built in the new city of Beirut was one of my clients for a period, and so I went over there quite frequently to see how they were doing. To show how secure they were, lots of new glass buildings were being put up, most of it in private areas rather than in the municipal district in downtown Beirut, but the downtown was being cleaned up. The problem was the Lebanese were busily in the process of anticipating as bright a future as they've had in the past in the 1960s when 80,000 foreigners lived in and near Beirut itself and where Arabs came from the moneyed Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia to spend time there and enjoy themselves, and they overbuilt. They overbuilt and overpriced, and in the end it didn't turn out that way. Regrettably very few Europeans and only a handful of Americans are there even today. Arabs know what to do if they want to have fun; they buy a ticket and go to London or Paris.

Q: Did you find yourself increasingly moving over towards Egypt?

HOUGHTON: No, I went to Egypt to take a look at what was going on and did some work there in Egypt, but my best shot continued to be Lebanon because there were very few Americans who were working with Lebanon except for some Lebanese Americans and they were interested in doing different things. I was interested in working with government of Lebanon entities, and I was successful in getting a number to use my services in the United States. The Minister of Finance, for example, said, "I've got to come to the United States with my entourage and go to four major cities," and he turned to me at one point and said, "Where do you think I ought to go?" I said, "This doesn't involve a lot of brains. How long do you have?" "Three weeks," he said, so I said, "New York surely, that's where the financial institutions are; Washington DC, again for financial institution discussion as well as with the business community there; and then on to Houston and then on to Detroit, where your Arab American community is and will want to hear from you. If you have time to go to Los Angeles, I'd counsel that too, but three weeks will get you through those four cities – two weeks, I guess it was – and won't leave you much time." So he contracted me to do the set-ups all the way along. That was fun and interesting.

Q: In the Middle East circuit there's really nowhere. When you're looking at it, Lebanon and Egypt were almost the only production areas, weren't they, the only areas where things could be produced? When you think of Saudi Arabia, they get oil out.

HOUGHTON: Jordan produces certain types of things that might have been compatible in the United States, but really it was doing more not taking production from those countries and trying to introduce them to the United States as much as trying to find partners that would work with American firms that would potentially improve or increase American markets in that area of the world, Lebanon being a natural sort of jump-off point. Ideally what you'd like to get is an American firm of moderate size looking for an international partner in the Arab Middle East that would have access to Arab markets, Arab Middle Eastern markets, and then work with them to set up, if necessary, production and service facilities in that country from which they could then expand their market share. That's what you'd like to see, and in some cases you could find those kind of things. The Lebanese had a funny way of doing business sometimes that made it difficult to

be sure that everything got done the way the prospective American partner firm would want it, but in time you could get people together if you applied yourself.

Q: You stopped doing that when?

HOUGHTON: I stopped doing that a year ago to focus on the book that I'm in the process of completion at the moment. Once I finish that, I've got a very simple decision: Do I write another book or do I go back into business again?

DAVID L. MACK
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1968-1969)

Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: *You were in Beirut at the language school from when to when?*

MACK: The academic year, let's say August of 1968 to June of 1969.

Q: *Could you describe the school a bit? How the training was done and the setting?*

MACK: We had a small language unit in the former U.S. embassy building, the one that was subsequently destroyed by a truck bomb much later. But the Foreign Service Institute field school was located on about the fourth floor, as I recall, of this big office building. We mixed as well as we could with Lebanese trying to use our Arabic as we learned it, but unfortunately many Lebanese speak English, so it wasn't ideal. But the program had very good teachers who tended to be either Lebanese or Palestinians who had been living in Lebanon. It was a very intensive program, a very tough program, and very much occupied our time. We were not integrated into the embassy to any great extent, although we took our rotation as duty officers at the embassy. We got to know the ambassador and other embassy officers, but we were clearly there to study the language. We could also take classes in politics, etc., at the American University in Beirut, which I did for a while. We could travel around the country. You were still able to travel to most parts of Lebanon, although the extreme southern part at that point was under the control of Palestinians and not really a safe place for American officials.

While in Beirut I really got into the major political controversies of the Arab world. Our classroom

conversations usually focused on political issues. Our teachers, I think, were keen to see that we not only learned Arabic, but that we gained understanding of the Arab perspective of issues. And to the extent that there's any truth about the Arabist myth, there is some truth to the fact that you tend to develop a sense of commitment to learning the language and understanding the human side of Arabs and why it is that they take the political positions they do. Obviously you're interested in their culture, as well as their political attitudes.

I think most of us coming out of the school felt that U.S. national interests were often ignored because of the very strong relationship between the U.S. Government and the Israeli government, and the great deal of political influence that Israel could exercise on U.S. domestic politics through the American-Jewish community. That's not to say that some of the students did not remain pro-Israeli in their views. Most of us, myself included, felt great impatience that the Arabs were so reluctant to enter into direct talks with the Israelis. I argued at great length with my teachers that the Arabs made a terrible mistake in dealing the way they did with the Israelis because the Israelis tended to come together, and to have a very great solidarity when faced with Arab military threats or the Arab economic boycott. But based on my own impressions in previous assignments, and particularly when I was in Jerusalem, the Israelis, if offered a possibility of peaceful relationships with their neighbors, would not only take the offer but would probably be inclined to quarrel among themselves and end up being a lot less awesome as an enemy than the Arabs assumed. And the idea of the Israelis dominating the Middle East seemed to me to be very unlikely. I didn't feel that they had that kind of economic base or those kinds of political and cultural abilities. A few Arabists become very enthusiastic in a kind of a naive way about the Arab world. Most Arabists, as is true of most American diplomats who served in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, tend to view both Arabs and Israeli attitudes with a great deal of skepticism. As one of my colleagues put it, he felt he was becoming an anti-Semite in the broadest possible sense, including antipathy to both Arabs and Jews. However, we did try to maintain a sympathetic understanding for the attitudes of both sides.

Q: *Here you were concentrating on Arabic, you have to identify to a certain point, you make a commitment to this. And the Arabs have been losing rather steadily and rather badly, and you're getting involved with a loser. Did that make any impression with you at all?*

MACK: I don't think that was it so much. Most people who had gone into Arabic did so because they felt that over time the Arab states were going to become stronger. Not that they would be able to eliminate Israel, as some of the extremist Arabs said they wanted to do, but that they would certainly become stronger societies, more economically prosperous, and would have a greater weight in world politics. And I think the reason why most of us were prepared to spend as much time as we did learning the language is because we felt that these countries were going to be more important in the future than they are now. I don't really think there was a feeling that we were being identified with people who were losers and being picked on so much as a feeling of real concern that the U.S. Government was going to alienate permanently countries that would be in a position to harm U.S. interests unless we found some common ground with them.

Q: *On the more practical side, again because I'm trying to capture the spirit of an Arabist of your generation, what were the career considerations? Not just you, but the others. You'd sit around and everybody sort of keeps a figure on their number where they're going to go.*

MACK: Well, mind you, after the June 1967 war the career considerations looked pretty bleak. Our diplomatic relations had been ruptured in roughly half the states of the Arab world.

Q: We're talking about the career considerations, they were looking bleak.

MACK: As I say, with diplomatic relations broken in roughly half the states, there were no U.S. diplomats present in Baghdad, Damascus, and a couple of other places. There was a U.S. Interests Section in Cairo, but it was very small. So as a result I guess we were all focused on the near term. Would we have jobs as Arabists at the end of this very tough course of training? And there was a certain amount of competition among the students to scramble for available jobs. In the end I think everybody got placed in an appropriate job. This was a period when to be an Arabist you had to have a fair amount of confidence that things were going to get better. If they had not, the career opportunities would have been very, very limited.

Q: *Who were some of the people with you taking it about the same time, do you remember?*

MACK: People were already there when I arrived, because many people had been doing the full two-year program. People like George Lumsden, Nicholas Murphy, Stephen Buck, David Ransom and his wife Marjorie, both of whom were studying Arabic. She had been in the U.S. Information Agency and was able to return later. Arthur Houghton was there and a number of other officers including officers from U.S. Information Agency. I was very close to Arthur Houghton and David Ransom, both of whom arrived at roughly the time I did, both of whom having had a fair amount of Arabic. The three of us were quite close. David Ransom is still in the Service, he's our ambassador in Bahrain, his wife Marjorie is Deputy Chief of Mission in Damascus. Arthur Houghton retired fairly early and has gone on to other careers since then. Stephen Buck was the person to whom I was closest probably. We had known each other back in college, and had been in the FS-100 class together. We shared one Arabic class, and I remember how ill prepared he was for most of the classes because Steve was spending most of his time as a young bachelor in the company of a young Lebanese girl, whom he later married. In fact, I was best man at their wedding in Lebanon, and we still see each other periodically here in Washington. It was a time when people did develop a close bond because of the shared experience of studying Arabic together, the shared career concerns, and concerns about the future of the Arab world, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Q: *Looking ahead a bit did you find that you were able to call on friends in other Arabic embassies at various times in your career, and say, give me the real story of what's happening here or there?*

MACK: For me developing advanced Arabic skills made the difference between having a successful career, and one that I would have found very disappointing. I came out of the course with a 4-4+ in Arabic...

Q: ...which is very high.

MACK: And I'd done so after having been there for only 10 months. I was able to go off to other assignments where the Arabic was absolutely essential. In my next post, I was the interpreter for our ambassador. Aside from being able to gain information from Arab contacts, both other Arab diplomats, Arab businessmen, and Arab university professors I was able to convey very effectively

U.S. Government policies in a language that had a direct and immediate impact. And, frankly, I had a lot more fun. I had reached the level where even people who had good English, although maybe they hadn't had university studies in the United States, would prefer to speak Arabic with me because my Arabic was at a level where that seemed to be the most sensible thing to do. So this made life a lot better and a lot more enjoyable for me certainly.

Q: *What about the people you went to train with, the Arabic network? These are in large terms but later in your career were you able to tap the various people whom you've mentioned and others.*

MACK: Among diplomats who have taken the trouble to learn a language there's kind of an immediate bond. It's easy to strike rapport with somebody, even people who are much senior to you, and have been in the Service for 20 years, or 15 years. There was an immediate rapport based upon having taken the trouble to learn a hard language and gotten into the culture of the area. And that's made a big difference. I've always taken an interest in the training of younger Arabists. In a subsequent post, after the Arabic language school had been moved to Tunis, I was the Deputy Chief of Mission and I worked very hard to make sure that the Arabic language school was a full part of the mission and was given all the necessary support. I keep meeting people from that period. U.S. military officers who were studying Arabic there at that time remember me with a lot of appreciation for that. So there was this kind of brotherhood, and sisterhood. Later on we began to train women in Arabic. At the time I went to the school we were not training women in Arabic, and I think it was a mistake. I know for a fact that April Glaspie was kept out of the school on one assignment in part because there was skepticism about the desirability of women diplomats in the Arab world. That has been changed.

Q: *Should we stop here because I know you're under a time pressure. I just want to put on the end we will pick up. You have left Beirut in 1969 and where you go after that.*

DAVID M. RANSOM
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1968-1969)

Ambassador David M. Ransom was born in Missouri in 1938. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1960, he served in the US Marine Corps from 1962-1965. His career has included positions in Taiz, Teheran, Beirut, Jeddah, Sana'a, Abu Dhabi, Damascus, and an ambassadorship to Bahrain. Ambassador Ransom was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November, 1999.

Q: You went to Beirut when?

RANSOM: It would have been 1968.

Q: You were there one year.

RANSOM: Eleven months. It was a two year course, but both Marjorie and I were very good at the

language and we got up to very high levels of proficiency - 4/4 - in 11 months After 11 months, we were exhausted by the race to learn more and more words every night and with more and more lessons. So we asked to go to our next post, which turned out to be Jeddah.

Q: Let's talk a bit about Arabic language training. Could you describe the students who were taking it with you? Where were they coming from? Discuss the often used accusation that we turn out anti-Israel, pro-Arabists and all that.

RANSOM: It's hard to avoid that charge. We made friends with Lebanese Muslims and Christians who had very little love for Israel. We were learning the vocabulary of political and economic affairs and so our source of information were Arabic newspapers, which did not admire Israel.

The teachers were very devoted and very good. They felt that they were developing the future American diplomatic corps in the Middle East. Under the guise of teaching Arabic, they worked through their own lives, attitudes, and political philosophies. Those were the main subjects of our discussions. There was in the Levant a tremendous antipathy towards American support of Israel. It was everywhere in society, so the teachers weren't doing anything egregiously different. They were only reflecting their own background and world view. They had all been humiliated by the Six Day War and the Israeli victory. Nasser was a fallen god. There was a great deal of bitterness. They didn't know exactly how to approach the next stage. They were saddled with impossible political positions which governed their response to all Israeli proposals for settlement and peace. That locked the Arabs into a confrontation which, in the end, they found they couldn't win. But in the late 1960's that was impossible to admit. So, they had stalemate in politics.

The fact is, however, that whatever the tone of the training might have been, no one in that course was ever influenced to do anything against instructions or against his or her conception of common interests. We did have the rare opportunity to get to know Arabs, deal with Arabs, talk to Arabs, and understand Arabs. It was not balanced by a comparable experience with the Israelis. At that time, to go to Israel for an assignment meant that you couldn't really be sure you would be accepted in an Arab post afterwards; so the divide was set. It is my view that the Foreign Service is a group of servants of the United States government working in foreign affairs. We did what we were told to do to implement a given policy. We may have had a chance to debate it, but once we received instructions, we carried them out faithfully and fully.

Q: I think this was essentially Israeli propaganda. If you're not 100% with us, then you're against us. I don't think it works anymore, but in the old days, the Arabists were tainted with this.

RANSOM: I think that's true. I tried at several points in my career to get an assignment to Israel. It never was possible. I wanted to rub some of the "Arabist" tarnish off and I wanted my own experience with seeing the other side. It never worked. It was just the vagaries of the assignment process and the timing. When Marjorie went back in to USIA on a full-time basis, we had to work out our assignments together, which we did very happily. It made for a wonderful life and wonderful careers, but it wasn't always easy for one person to take up a post somewhere when he or she might have preferred another one, but we had to go where there two positions available at a post. So, that limited our preferences.

Q: While you were in Beirut, this was the 1968-1969 period, what was the situation there?

RANSOM: The civil war in Beirut did not really start until 1975; so we were a long way from that. The Lebanese economy was booming because the oil money from the Gulf came there to be invested both in real estate and in banks. The Syrians were quiescent after their defeat in the Six Day War. They were going through their own turmoil at home and were in no position to threaten anyone. Lebanon was a little bastion of western sympathy run by a Christian group that felt itself not Arab but something different and not eager to march in step with Egypt, especially against Israel. The border with Israel was quiet. It was a very nice period. There were a lot of strains in the body politic, but the Maronite Christians felt they had a special power and responsibility - the Shia didn't count, the Sunnis were collaborators, the Orthodox came along with the Armenians, and the Palestinians were a thorn in Lebanon. It would be years after the late 1960s before the status quo would break down. At the time we were there, it didn't look half bad. It was a great place to live. There were restaurants and hotels all over the country. We traveled everywhere. We had again found people extraordinarily friendly. Lebanon was a sweet place.

MARJORIE RANSOM
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1968-1969)

Marjorie Ransom was born in New York in 1938. She received her bachelor's degree from Trinity University in 1959 and her master's degree from Columbia University in 1962. Her career includes positions in Jordan, India, Iran, Yemen, Washington D.C., Abu Dhabi, Syria, and Egypt. Mrs. Ransom was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 2000.

Q: 1968. Arabic language class. Was it a nine-month course?

RANSOM: The course was as long as the department would let us stay. I think I had eight months of study and then I had to drop out for my mother-in-law's visit. When we arrived in Beirut, I was a spouse. At that point in time, the Foreign Service Institute had no full-time language classes for spouses, but we persuaded Haile Smith, the director, and Jim Snow, the linguist, to let me study full-time. They agreed, as long as one of the other students would not object to my being in his class. So, we were tested. As I recall, there were three Foreign Service officers who tested at about the same level – my husband, David; Arthur Houghton; and David Mack. Arthur and I were near the same level. He had no objection to my studying with him. So, they very nicely let me study. I was extremely appreciative. So, I did all that study as a spouse. They couldn't register my score in the end, but they at least told me how I did.

Q: I assume they made a certain mark in the books somewhere.

RANSOM: Yes, I'm recorded. I got a 3/4 and I was very pleased. I went in with a 2/2+. In those days, Beirut was a lovely place to live. We were near the school, which was in the Embassy around the corner from our apartment. There were some other students there who had been there before.

Joe Montville was there. There were several others. But we ended up being a very close-knit nucleus – the Houghtons, the Macks, David and myself. David managed to take a course at AUB with Walid Khalidi, but that was really one of the few activities we had outside our language studies. We knew it was a rare opportunity and we made the most of it.

We were supposed to go from Beirut to Jerusalem, but there was some type of downsizing and the position that David was to go into was abolished. Then, we were supposed to go to Jordan. For a whole bunch of reasons, we ended up going instead to Jeddah. But I remember those nine months in Beirut as a really unique opportunity.

Q: How did you find the Arabic program?

RANSOM: I had studied a very classical approach to Arabic at Colombia, where there was a lot of emphasis on grammar and almost none on vocabulary and rapid reading. It was just the reverse in Beirut and it was absolutely what we needed. We were just thrilled. They had the green books of well-prepared language materials. They were relatively new at that point, but I think they're still using them. The materials were good. The teachers were extremely dedicated, and very knowledgeable about the current political situation. It was really an ideal learning environment.

Q: Were you getting any reflection of what was going on in Beirut at the time?

RANSOM: There were some political problems at the time. We lived in a building with a Palestinian manager who often talked to us about the desperate plight of Palestinians in Lebanon at that time. But it was early in the developments that led to the Lebanese Civil War. We left Beirut in the summer of '69. I think the problems really began to develop the following year.

Q: Yes. It was Black September, too, wasn't it? It had repercussions all throughout the Palestinian community.

WILLIAM D. MORGAN
Chief, Consular Section
Beirut (1968-1973)

William D. Morgan was born in Rochester, New York in 1925. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester in 1949 and a master's degree in foreign service from the University of Maryland in 1953. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. Mr. Morgan's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Paris, Birmingham, Moscow, Beirut, Montreal, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed in 1990 by Lester Elliot Sadlou.

Q: *Your first major consular assignment was as consul general to Beirut in Lebanon in 1968. You stayed there for five years. How did you view this position?*

MORGAN: Well, again, the short answer is Lorie Lawrence. He talked me into going to Beirut. I

was supposed to go to Haiti as chief of the political section. I was trying to sell one of my clients, a political officer, to him to go to Beirut. He said, "No, no. You've convinced me completely. You're the one that should go to Beirut." And I said, "Fine." I had no problems with it. It certainly sounded interesting, but most importantly, because I had learned more about the new strengths, the new opportunities in the consular function. Also, Beirut, in those days, sounded like (and was) a wonderful place. Finally, one of my former bosses in PER, Bob Houghton, was going to go out as DCM, my boss, and that certainly sounded good. Additionally, the job called for somebody who could speak French. The answer to your question is: I really looked forward to it. It looked like a lot of fun. I was also 20 years younger.

Q: *What were your principal tasks as the consul general? Would you describe the section and what you felt that you, as the consul general, could contribute?*

MORGAN: I've got to amend part of your question: I was not consul general and could not be, for interesting reasons. The DCM had to bear the title of consul general, because somewhere back in Washington, they had worked out this arrangement that should Lebanon fall apart, God forbid, and someone stay there as a representative of our nation, because of severed diplomatic relations, the consul general could stay on and maintain consular relations. Obviously, it couldn't be the chief of the consular section, because he couldn't handle such a thing; it would be the DCM. So the DCM bore the "secret", if you will, or at least not-well-advertised title of consul general. I was a consul, chief of the consular section. That's an aside.

Q: *I think it's also important, in that in the late Sixties, even, the title of consul general was passed out very sparingly, no matter how large the section.*

MORGAN: Yes, and in this case, because of its political relevance. In other words, there are places in the world where you can maintain a consular relationship with a country, or at least a lower than full diplomatic relationship. I don't know if that exists today.

Q: *This happened, I believe, in Cambodia at one point, just about that time, and I think everyone was very concerned about it. As chief of the consular section, what were you doing*?

MORGAN: The overriding job was protection and welfare work, even in those days, in '68 when I arrived. Although it was relatively peaceful, there were certainly enough problems around, hangovers from the '67 War. We had a large American community, and it still remembered well the '67 evacuation which, to many, was not well done. The embassy was seen by some as not supportive, and the evacuation wasn't well-programmed. That huge American community consisted of Lebanese Americans, academics, religious, wives of Lebanese, but largely business people, because that was then the Paris of the Middle East. The American business community was very, very strong -- and happy to be there! Coincidental with my arrival -- someone accused me of causing it -- was the increase in the drug arrests, mostly hashish, and the serious growing problem with drug use. So that whole area of protection of Americans was an enormous part of the job, and was growing. In the five years I was there, drugs were progressively more and more the name of the job.

The other part of the assignment, of course, related to the ever-present visa issues that face most

posts, but certainly were enormous in a country like Lebanon. All aspects of the visa function were involved: heavy volume, fraud, a feeling in most Lebanese' minds, sort of like the Filipino, that the United States owes a visa to all Lebanese because of this special, this historical relationship. Any Lebanese that wants to go to the United States should be able to go. The fact that they had to provide a document that some silly vice consul asks for, and they don't happen to have it, won't get in the way. They can simply go out and get it, sure, from their local pastor or whomever, the mokhtar, will provide it for them (for free?). This whole question of getting to the United States -- or as many of them put it to me, having a green card in their pocket for security reasons -- was something the U.S. owed Lebanese, especially Christians. The fact that there were a series of rules, regulations, criteria was irrelevant to a Lebanese, like to many Middle Easterners. Such impediments are there because some silly bureaucrat put them there, and they're there to be gotten around. It isn't a matter of breaking laws or anything; it's just that's the way it's done in the real world.

Q: *I wanted to talk about some of these functions, but first let's go to the section. How well was it staffed? I'm really thinking more about the officers there. Was it a problem dealing with the officers in this type of work? How good were the officers?*

MORGAN: A gross answer to your question is, no, it was not a problem. Five years there, looking back over that period, the pluses were far greater than the minuses, I think, in part because people that were assigned to Beirut were assigned, perhaps, with a degree of caution by the central establishment. It wasn't like an assignment to, say, Canada or to Europe, where perhaps less strong officers are sent.

Q: *Just to digress for a minute, you and I both worked in personnel, and know that problem cases, personality, drinking, other types of problem cases, are sent to either close to the United States or to the larger . . .*

MORGAN: Places where they can be buried, "assimilated".

Q: *And one time I remember hearing that London had accumulated more than its share of problem cases.*

MORGAN: I can prove that, if you'd like me to. But yes, we had problems in Beirut. We had a problem with drinking, we had problems with competence levels. As a whole, however, the officers who came to Beirut were good, and I would answer the question by saying not only did I think there was a degree of sensitivity in assignments, but I think the place brought people together. I mean, the excitement, the professional challenge, the integrated aspect of the mission. I will brag that I refused to look, from that assignment on, at the consular function as anything other than absolutely equal to all the other functions. I felt, as the leader of the consular section, my job was primarily to make sure everybody understood that. And if they didn't, then they were going to hear exactly why it was.

Q: *Let's talk about that. As specifically as you can, how did you deal with the rest of the embassy?*

MORGAN: On various levels. There was the section chief to section chief relationship, the

country team meetings, sessions with the DCM, with the ambassador, all that institutional intercourse that goes on in a Mission. That was a normal way to sell your section.

Q: *You felt that there was a selling job to be done.*

MORGAN: Oh, absolutely. From day one to the last day, and through the rest of my career.

Q: *I'm with you, but I'd like to get this down.*

MORGAN: It won't sell itself. As a matter of fact, it will go the opposite direction if all consular officers are not conscious of this necessity. You've got to get out and sell your section.

Q: *Far more than many of the other sections.*

MORGAN: I think some of the others failed to sell their sections. I think they could have afforded to and it was needed in explaining the section's work and responsibilities to the whole Mission. I think USIA is very good at projecting its image. It knows, as an often maligned and misunderstood function, that it's got to speak up.

Q: *What do you mean by selling?*

MORGAN: Making clear that all your colleagues -- often it's the ambassador that's the least of the problems -- know what the consular section does and how all aspects of its work relate to Mission objectives. Junior officers often need to learn the most about the importance of consular work. There's nothing worse than an uninformed, self-impressed FSO-6 in the political section. They are the least understanding, the least wise, probably, because of lack of experience and immaturity. But how do you show that each segment of the embassy is affected by events in the consular section? In Lebanon, it was very easy. For example, everyone's got a visa client on their back. The intervention in Lebanon is probably one of the strongest in the world. I know of other countries where intervention is important but there is not a person that works for the Beirut embassy, on the FSN or on the officer level, that isn't attacked -- you can use whatever verb you want -- by local contacts all the time. They've got a cousin that needs a visa, and is 100% bona fide. So therefore, a consular officer has something that he can give them, or at least deal with.

Q: *How would you deal with them on this type of thing? I'm talking about within the embassy. Is it a give and take?*

MORGAN: Well, first of all, you deal with them professionally. In other words, you don't become defensive. You give them a clear-cut, non-bureaucratic, non-legalistic answer to whatever the question is. Keep smiling, keep laughing, keep translating the particular question into their terms. Use diplomacy, I guess, is the word. In other words, as a diplomat, you have to know how the other person feels about something, what they're suffering, what their hangups are, what the restrictions are. Put your own self into their position. Be collegial, show how you have a common interest. Never, ever throw the book at them; never say, "It's the law," or, "That's the way it will be," or, "No, I won't," or whatever. Just treat them as humans, and keep smiling.

Of course, you see all your colleagues socially, you see them in many modes, so that you've got the opportunity frequently to project your job. For example, we shared a chalet down on the beach with the DCM and several American families including one that was later a hostage, David Dodge. You're alone at the beach and you discover yourself with the DCM's wife. Lois Houghton loved to hear stories about our latest visa challenge or details on our newest arrested American. That fed back to the DCM, but from a different perspective. In other words, there is a general network of information flowing from the consular section throughout the whole mission. Sometimes the stories were amusing, sometimes they were sexy, sometimes they were very substantive. Often they were stories related to the foreign policy issues of Lebanon and what it was going on internally that affected the U.S. So I don't think it's very hard to sell the consular function, especially at a post like Lebanon. But it was equally true in Paris a few years later.
Q: *You're saying that to be the head of a consular section, it really requires diplomacy within the embassy, and the humor and using the fact that we're dealing with people to bring what the consular section does home to everybody else within the embassy.*

MORGAN: Isn't that one of the strongest characteristics of consular work, that it's human, that it's people-related? And if you don't know how to do it with your own colleagues, then you've missed opportunity number one, because from then on, you're defeated. You don't get your budgets, you don't get sympathy, you don't get support you need. You've got to start with your post associates.

Q: *Moving down to the other colleagues, your junior officers.*

MORGAN: I'm going to move up to them.

Q: *Moving in parallel to your other colleagues.*

MORGAN: See, I don't fall into these traps, Stu, that are out there about "going down".

Q: *But I'm speaking in chart terms, dealing with your junior officers. You had junior officers who were coming through, who were very much a product of the Sixties, which was a "show me" period, a challenging period, actually a fun period, I think, for most supervisors. Many of them were only spending a relatively short time within the consular section before they moved on to different functions on rotational things. How did you sell the consular function to get them to work correctly, but also to give them an appreciation for the consular function?*

MORGAN: I think, picking up from the theme of collegial relationship with others, first off it is essential to make clear that I expected them also to work collegially with one and all. Maybe they couldn't sit down with the DCM's wife in the same way I could, but I expected at whatever level of the embassy they dealt with that they never should be defensive about what they were doing, and never be bureaucratic. It's much easier for a vice consul to start talking about the law, because they are so close to it and don't understand it necessarily as philosophically or historically as we older ones. The vice consul really is overwhelmed by all these legal and regulatory technicalities. "Don't get into that kind of an answer with colleagues. Do the same thing I'm doing." But more important, perhaps, or parallel, letting JOs know by example what I'm doing. Share with them on a daily basis, as they're working or formally at meetings or whatever, everything that's going on. And maybe even telling some inside stories about how I got the political counselor, Bob Oakley, and I

really snookered him last week by doing X, Y, and Z, or whatever. Make sure the JOs understand and feel that they belong to a very important organization, and to a subtribe as well, and let's have fun doing it. Let's get it out in the open, and let's be demonstrably professional. That's the other part of the question, because they were learning their new trade at the same time. I felt I must be on the visa line -- actually and in spirit -- with them all the time. Equally important, you must have your door open all the time. They must know the boss is with them. Such things, I think, are but examples of how you can develop JOs.

I think you've really got to translate your open-doorness and your on-the-line-with-themness into seeking at all times opportunities to discuss the substance of what's going on, the substance of the visa decision, the substance of the flow of people, the substance of the political problems in having the congressmen on your back constantly over clients that are arrested and obviously are good people and shouldn't be arrested because they're from Harvard or whatever. All of the issues that can really mislead and discourage junior officers, as they do senior officers, must be part of the training and development process, both for their own morale and pride, but also so they'll develop professionally. I never thought of JOs as rotational or "established" consular officer by the cone they were placed in. As far as I was concerned, they were junior officers learning some very important rules of diplomacy and professional development.

Q: *From what I gather, you are saying, from your experience -- and I'd have to say from mine, too -- that much of being a consul general or chief of the section consists of getting out and talking to your officers, sharing with them all the time. It's not a matter of sitting back and every once in a while having a staff meeting, delegating authority and all, but it's really explaining what's going on all the time. There's a lot of officer-to-officer contact in this.*

MORGAN: Yes. You've got to be yourself. I mean, if you're a little shyer than I am or whatever is your own personality, you must be true to it. I can give you a set of rules right now that I lived by, but they're my rules; they might not apply to another person. But with that caveat, if you want to call it that, with one's own stylistic approach, I think it is imperative never the less to show to each and every officer, and FSN, naturally, that you understand and appreciate what they're doing, and you're helping them to learn how to correct things if they're not doing it right.

My habit -- and again, maybe someone else won't do that -- was that a day seldom went by in the last 20 years that I didn't find myself at every one's work station for at least a few moments. I remember in Paris, Joe Cheevers, who was head of the visa section; I think he thought I was trying to run his section. That's a very difficult problem that you have. You've got to balance what kind of relationship you have with subordinates, with a brand-new visa officer, with the immediate supervisor. The supervisor in between you and the more junior person might think, "Oh, what's he doing in there? He's usurping my authority," or something like that. The answer to that is very, very important: be certain to tell that supervisor soonest everything you did with that subordinate. It's a good opportunity to give him a quick analysis of how you think that junior officer or FSN is doing or where you see some weaknesses. You can't take over that middle manager's supervisory role. On the other hand, I think you don't know what's going on, and you can't be "inspirational" or you can't perform the leadership function properly unless you have that relationship. Yes, there are other ways of doing that, such as by meetings, but there must be one-on-one interplay. I must say I've used staff meetings many, many a time to get the troops to vote for the things I really want, by

having a democracy at work, which is sharing and getting out certain issues. Then the next thing you know, some vice consul's coming forward with the very thing you want them all to do. And it is his or her idea! So yes, there isn't just a one-on-one thing with the vice consul and going over a draft with him or a decision that he's made or how you're about to convince him how he really should reverse his refusal. That's part of it, but it's also the community of the section as a body politic.

Q: *One other factor that we haven't brought up. Could you talk about dealing with a Foreign Service national? Obviously, particularly in the consular function, there are key individuals who represent continuity and often are not treated as well as they might by junior officers, who look on them as mere clerks.*

MORGAN: Well, mere clerks -- they look on them as servants, and in some cases, they look at them as worse than that, in the sense that they are often very maltreated by vice consuls. That is one of the first lessons that you teach vice consuls: how to work with FSNs. I wouldn't argue that you can't get along without them; the Soviets have just proved that we can get along without them in Moscow, I guess. But in any event, we have, as supervisors, a vital lesson to teach officer relationship with FSNs. It's a social lesson, but it's also a practical lesson.

But beyond that, I think my experience over the years with FSNs has been a mixed one, perhaps because FSNs can be such a varied group of workers. You can have the most severe cases of poor professionalism, incompetence. In Beirut, we used to call it the chauffeur syndrome: promoted to get him out of the car pool. Where do you promote him? You promote him to the consular section, because the consular chief always can be conned into taking one more person. As a result you have a person brought into a section that they shouldn't have been in the first place, and then kept there through this marvelous thing called tenure. And you can't get rid of an incompetent if you don't know how to. Then you have, unfortunately, some FSNs who have been around too long and really aren't that effective any longer. I shouldn't start off with a negative, but there is that aspect. It is a reality. Sections have some plateaued FSNs that say, "We always did it this way," or "We can't change," or whatever. And how you work with such folk has been an incredible challenge to me.

The other side of the question is perhaps even more demanding. You've got people that are so bloody talented, are so wise, are so skilled, and in some cases, many years in the function; they're just topnotch. They know how to work with these constantly changing section chiefs and officers and so on. With these real professionals you suffer favoritism, and that, believe me, as a section chief, is perilous. How you make it clear that you don't favor somebody is an art, but I think it's essential to master it.

How do you take those extremes and those in the middle, too, and supervise wisely? As section chief, show by example and demonstrate that all of the FSNs are equal in terms of fair treatment. Skills are rewarded and incompetence corrected or punished. It's not easy.

Q: *Another question. I'm moving off to dealing with the community at large, moving in gradual steps. How did you, as section chief, make sure that the public was well served? I assume in Lebanon, when the doors opened in the morning, you had a considerable number of people coming in every day.*

MORGAN: Yes.

Q: *It's always a concern to make sure that the experience is at least, if not pleasurable, at least it's not unpleasurable.*

MORGAN: The answer concerns both treatment of the American community as well as the Lebanese community. How do you make the physical setup responsive to both the clients coming in and to the staff, so it can perform effectively and responsively? What we had when I arrived in Beirut was an extraordinarily bad section lay out. It was an old apartment building, our embassy in Beirut, before it was finally blown up. It was bombed seriously while I was there, but after I left, they really had a go at it. How you redo an apartment house is not what the managers in those days were skilled at. So we had an extraordinarily inefficient operation, very bad security, poor people-flow, etc. And what it did -- I'm now singling out the American clientele because this is important to me, how you, as section chief, balance the American community and the foreigners -- was show our most inefficient and bureaucratic side. The American community has first preference, and you should receive the best and fastest service. They pay your salary through their taxes, as any American will be quick to tell you if he doesn't get the kind of service he wants.

So how you assure (or create) a service-oriented, smooth-flowing layout for the foreigners, largely Lebanese, visa applicants and notarials -- and there were a lot of notarial services -- and for Americans as well -- was an overwhelming challenge. I'll quickly say I was incompetent to solve it but the space problem was mastered by the administrative counselor, Vic Dikeos. He knew that the only way to do it was by a massive restructuring. I kept saying, "Well, we don't have the money," blah, blah, blah, blah. I was clearly a typical small-thinking bureaucrat. He said, "I'll take care of the money, and I'll take care of the GSO labor. All I want out of you is to tell me how this place can run better." And fortunately, at the end of my first year, we completely destroyed the existing inefficient consular section and, through his leadership and supply of funds and encouragement, we restructured it. I guess my point is, you need others to help you. You not only need them because they have the money, but you also need them because they have the know-how and they've got the encouragement you need to succeed.

Lesson number one: get to know your admin counselor. Know him well and use him! But as a colleague who is working on the same team as you are.

Q: *Put him on your side.*

MORGAN: Yes. I didn't realize he was ahead of me. There aren't many out there that are ahead of you in support of the consular section but I have, fortunately, run into a few of them that are. I can't stress enough, and you know, like many of my colleagues over the last 20 years do, how important I think physical setup is. If the consular chief does not know how to plan and try and figure out what the flow of the people is and how it varies with the time of the day and the changing patterns of work load demands, he's not performing his function as a manager. So that's my first response to you of how do you react to the people-flow. The second one is the actual physical layout, restructuring where necessary. Of course, fortunately, in the 20 years, we've gone a long way on this aspect of a strong consular section. I have witnessed monumental changes in physical layout

planning, which makes both the working conditions better and the professional staff reactions to the clients much, much better. It's for those reasons that we improve people-flow and physical layout, not to make it prettier or improve morale: those follow.

Related to that, of course, is how do you provide a faster and more efficient service? How do you take 500 visa applicants coming at you and figure out how to move quickly those who don't need careful screening versus how do you slow down and process more attentively -- spend your officer and FSN time more effectively -- those that need more scrutiny? Same with the Americans or with the non-visa function, for example, the notarials. How do you have a place that is targeted for those people, so they know they're not going to be all mixed up with visa applicants in the waiting areas? How do you keep the minimum number of people in the waiting area? Flow the people through, get them serviced more quickly, and thereby, I think, do a more professional job? And how do you sort out those that really need the time? When the mother of the prisoner arrives, how do you make sure she isn't caught up in the visa line? Whatever you want to call all that bag of logistical management questions -- the reaction to the crowds -- the issue is the heart of the management of the consular section.

Q: *Let's move on now to dealing with the American community. You were saying they wanted support from the embassy.*

MORGAN: They wanted leadership. They, I'm pleased to say, are not like some other Americans abroad: opposed to the American Embassy, opposed to the U.S. government role. I guess they knew in Lebanon that the American Government was thoroughly sensitive to Middle East issues. We have been accused, those of us who served in Arab countries, of being tilted. But I think it was very clear to all people that Embassy Beirut understood what the problems were, and we understood the concerns of American business, academic and general community.

For example, the American school. I was on the board of the American Community School, a very important, very, very good school. Most consular officers do find themselves on such boards. But here we had, through the five-year period, a real identifiable security questions. Security from a hashish trafficking and use standpoint, security from an evacuation standpoint, security from a life-threatening standpoint. It was in the late Sixties and early Seventies, when children were less self-disciplined than they were before and are now. So you had all these security issues in a very lovely and free-wheeling place. The kids could go skiing in the morning and go to the beach in the afternoon. Who wants to go to school or avoid hashish dealers? So the role of the chief of the consular section in that part of the community was demonstrably center stage. I look back proudly to many a story concerning the principal or teachers or parents of how they could call Bill Morgan or call the American Embassy, and get a straightforward, helpful answer, and they got it right away. "Can we go to Damascus today?" Fine. "He told me no, and boy, we don't go." I mean, that a real support relationship.

And this same responsibility of consular support concerns equally the business community. There, of course, it was the entire embassy. The school was more oriented towards the USIA operation and the consular function, but when you deal with the business community, it was all across the board. The political section, the economic and commercial section, and so on. And that relationship, from the consular standpoint, was absolutely vital. There, of course, with the business

side, it was citizenship services, notarials. Also, general advise proffered. You met these people socially, and you proved to them that you were not only a fellow American, but you were professionally qualified. As the security and political troubles got worse and worse, it was vital that you conveyed the right degree of caution. You don't send out letters saying, "Today thou shalt not do the following." No, you can't do that. The E&E plan -- the evacuation plan -- in 1967, was implemented when we evacuated Americans. But it wasn't as successful as some thought it should be. That was one of the consular section's primary functions. How does it work? Well, an evacuation starts with knowledge of the number of Americans present in the country. Did the Americans register at the embassy? Not all. Did anybody tell them they had to? No. Did anybody encourage them? It's not like the British, where you must, otherwise you might lose your nationality.

So, shortly after I arrived I started a two- to three-year campaign to convince everyone that it was in their interest to register. We established a system in which all of the wardens, these individual embassy officers assigned responsibility for different parts of Lebanon, became more and more involved with their particular areas. We set up a mailing-address system, which was the basis for letters to registered Americans. I started, for the first time, a "Dear Fellow American," letter. This way all Americans got, every couple of months, for example at Christmas, a letter, but it also carried a message, a sense of relationship with the embassy, a sense of "someone does care." It also gave me an opportunity to do two things: first, flow information out to the American community, tell them, as things got worse, "Maybe you might want to send your mother-in-law home now," or "Maybe you better think about such things." But very carefully worded. Secondly, it provided the embassy with a refined evacuation listing. For example, I would get a telephone call, "Bill, I didn't get your letter."

"Well, are you registered?"

"I don't know. I told my wife to register. Didn't she do it?"

"Well, I don't know. Let me go look. No, you're not registered with us."

"Oh, well, I'll be in there tomorrow and register." As a result, we went from something like a 25% registry to 95%. So, after my departure in '73, in later evacuations we knew who was there. We knew how to contact them better. Just one example of how important it is to establish a relationship with the community particularly in a troubled area.

Q: *Bill, let's move to some of the problems. Could you talk about how you dealt there with the drug problem? Any specific cases of both using your officers and your position?*

MORGAN: Yes, I think this five-year period in Lebanon is historic because it not only was the real beginning of the drug issue on an international scale, but also it was in a country where the absolute finest hashish in the world was grown. Of course, the competition among world-wide dealers was tremendous. It affected us as consular officers, as an embassy, watching the drug tragedy just explode. I remember when I first arrived there, we had one prisoner, and he was a merchant sailor who had been on a ship in Naples, I think it was, and came down to Beirut for a nice weekend, and he got arrested for robbery. He'd got involved in some drunken brawl and

robbery. That was my prisoner.

When I left, five years later, the average count was 25 prisoners, 100% of them drugs, and maybe 25% were females, and 50% to 75% were university graduates, all those "nice, young people" that weren't supposed to be involved in this sort of thing, obviously caught in situations where they were totally "innocent".

Q: *Caught in situations totally innocent?*

MORGAN: At the airport, coming in on the way to somewhere, and they had a suitcase with a false bottom, and they didn't know that Joe, back in New York, had loaded the bottom part of the suitcase with all this stuff. Or leaving the country with hashish in great quantities. You know, kids! The local American minister's son and a dozen others picked up by the police and taken off to jail. I got a call at 11:00 o'clock at night during a dinner party I was giving, from the minister, saying, "My son is arrested, and he's off in jail." That's another part of the problem in Lebanon. It wasn't only the magnitude and the growth and sadness of it all, but it was the conditions. I mean, jails were horrible. The Sands prison was a Turkish 500-year-old prison that you wouldn't believe. I can still hear the words, "Konsul hon." It means, "The consul's here," as I would arrive at the prison, and the guard would scream out across the entrance area, "Watch out. Here comes the American consul!" And I did go, indeed. You talk about relations with the vice consuls and junior officers, yes, I had one officer and then two officers that did nothing but protection and welfare work. You bet your life I got involved, you know, not just to set an example or whatever, but because I got a telephone call, and you couldn't very well say, "All right, fine," especially to the Reverend or a friend, that you're sending your vice consul.

Q: *How would you deal with these cases?*

MORGAN: Well, you dealt with them the way, of course, we're all told to deal with them. You react instantly, and if you don't hear about it relatively instantly, you let police or the Lebanese attorney general know. They were quite good about this. Then you charge off, or whoever gets the call, to jail. Unfortunately, sometimes you learn first from the newspapers or the grapevine.

Q: *You went, or was it usually another officer?*

MORGAN: Usually another officer. Well, in the beginning, when I first went there, when it wasn't a major problem, I found myself more involved. But when it got into three or four arrests a week or more, like the student bunch, I think there were 18 kids that were arrested in one fell swoop, it was more and more the chief of the American protection unit and/or one of the vice consuls; often the duty officer. I don't know why, but I guess it seems always these things take place off hours. You are called, usually, at 10:00 o'clock at night or during cocktails or something like that, and you have to react right away.

You take along your "welcome kit", which we all had in our homes, to the jail or to the airport or wherever. What you did, of course, first and foremost, was to make sure that the individual saw both your ability and your limitations. Ability, in the sense that you were a fellow American and you could make clear that,"I sympathize with you, and I'm sorry you got yourself into this trouble.

I'm not making any judgment. Don't ask me to make any. I'm not a judge, and I'm not going to play that role, and I can't get you out of jail, but I can do some things for you." Then you proceed through what you could do. I guess mostly it's a cathartic relief to a person who is in a terribly emotional state. How can you, as a fellow American, get the person to calm down if they are excited, and specifically face the realities of the arrest that they're in the middle of? And you don't immediately say that your crime could get you 30 years in jail or even execution, but you make sure they realize that they've got some pretty heavy things ahead of them. Then you take out the famous list of lawyers, and you tell them that they need some legal advice, and you can't give it, other than you can tell them something about the legal system. Of course, you do. And you don't say all the things you might like to say or know, because that isn't the setting. But you do want them to realize, because they'll hear it other ways, and that is that there are ways of buying themselves through this particular situation or paying off the lawyer, the police or the judge, and discovering that it doesn't work or that isn't the way you do business or whatever.

Q: *This is a problem that I think all of us have faced in certain countries. An American is in trouble. You know that the system is such that often the best way to get out of it is a payoff of some kind, and this is how the system work, to a certain extent. Yet you are doing a great disservice to the American if you take a holier-than-thou attitude and say, "Well, we don't accept payoffs," because then they end up in jail in a very difficult situation.*

MORGAN: Yes.

Q: *But how do you deal with that particular problem?*

MORGAN: Based on my experience, in Lebanon at least, the problem was relatively easy, because my officers and I could say to anybody, "I know of no example where a person paid off and succeeded, and I know of lots of examples where they gouged them and they got nothing. Now, I'm not saying it doesn't exist. I'm just merely saying from my own experience, the chances are you will pay and you will get nothing for it. But that's your decision. If you have a lawyer that tells you he can pay off the judge, think very carefully. I can't say it isn't possible. I can't say it isn't actually not possible in the United States. It doesn't usually work, but you are only going to be able to face that yourself. All I can say to you, as your consular officer, is think very carefully about this. You will hear as I have heard of lots of stories of corruption here. I would say more important than corruption in this country is greed, the 'buck', the Lebanese pound, or whatever. They are very enterprising business people here, and they have dealt with it thousands of years and longer than you have. Go very carefully. Also, listen very carefully to what the judge is saying and what the authorities are saying. Many of them are quite honest, and you're going to have to live with yourself through this."

Stu, the real answer to the question was a "Lebanese solution", We had, fortunately, a Lebanese government, which included Armenians. The government's chief psychiatrist, I don't think that's what he was called, but that's what he was, was an Armenian by the name of Manougian. He ran a mental hospital just outside of Beirut which included a very, relatively speaking compared to the other prisons of Lebanon, tolerably pleasant drug detention center. And what he did was work out with me -- and I use the word "work out," that's too strong for it -- a "solution" for American prisoners. He thought it was wrong that Americans and Europeans, given their cultural, historical

background, should be exposed to some of the criminals that were in the Sands prison and even in the women's prison. He established, with the Lebanese authorities and the attorney general, that the act of drug use was a psychotic act and that those so convicted should be detained in his mental facility. The act of smuggling drugs wasn't. But if he could be convinced (by a "good" Lebanese lawyer) that the person who was smuggling drugs, in fact, used drugs -- fessed up to their use of drugs -- then they would be transferred, eventually, based on "psychotic behavior", to a far more civilized setting. That was the answer in Lebanon to the arrest of many of the American drug traffickers.

Q: *I might say that this was in its own way, almost exactly the same time when I was in Greece, the way it worked with us, too.*

MORGAN: There were solutions. There are local solutions to this legal problem. A person is caught and they go through a legal system, and the legal system of that country is a variation of the legal system in our country. So there is usually a varied form of punishment in various countries -- different than the American solution and therefor not understood by Americans arrested or the next-of-kin.

Q: *I think one of the great powers of the consul is the fact that most foreign authorities don't want to have a lot of foreigners in their jails. It's a bother and an expense to them, and so that often you can use the local authorities to figure a way to eventually get them out of the country.*

MORGAN: The Lebanese were caught in a quandary that other countries get caught in, and that is they were pressed by the United States, in this case, in two different directions. One is to stop the drug trafficking, stop the hashish growth. We had an good-sized DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] operation in Lebanon. We put considerable pressure in our anti-drug efforts on the Lebanese authorities, of which I was the Mission coordinator. I wore both hats. There's always the question, can you wear both hats? Can you protect an American and at the same time try to act as the coordinator against drugs in the country? The answer to that is yes, you can.

Q: *I took just the reverse position in Greece at the same time. I refused to wear both hats.*

MORGAN: Well, we could argue this, but we won't take up the time. The point being that the Lebanese found themselves under this double pressure. So they wanted to get rid of American prisoners. But at the same time, they had to have an impeccable record of not being soft or duplicitous on drug traffickers. Other countries were involved too, the Danes and the French and the British and other Arabs were all being arrested for the same thing. So there had to be equitable treatment, and the American sometime "suffered" from this equitable treatment.

When it went too far, whenever we found ourselves with the Lebanese "misbehaving", for example, if there wasn't proper notification of arrest, or we felt that a judge really was being inequitable, or we had something -- in all cases it had to be something measurable -- I would go to the attorney general, a very important person in Lebanon. Sometimes I would go with the ambassador or DCM, depending on the level of representation that we wished to bring. Here again, there was always present a certain political reality. We haven't talked about this, but as far as serving as a consular officer in Lebanon, there was never a moment in anything I did that it wasn't

"political" in nature. By that I mean that not only the Lebanese situation but also because of the realities of the Middle East there were dangers that related to consular problems and involved Lebanese society.

Something we haven't talked about at all, that I found in my last couple of years there involved protecting U.S. interests in Syria. We had no diplomatic relations with Syria. In '67, they cut ties with the United States, and there was no entry to that bordering country. I mean, no American was allowed into Syria. Then in 1969 it began to open. The Syrians advised the Italians who represented us that certain Americans might enter. I was one of the first officials to go into Syria but only as the consul; this goes back to the role you can play as a consular officer. Then came the apprehension of the military attaché from Beirut. The Major was a student at the U.S. Army Middle East area studies program there. He was caught taking photographs of strategic Mt. Hermon on an open road on the way to Damascus. He was arrested, maltreated and was kept for three or four months. This was not dealt with directly on a diplomatic level, because we had no diplomatic relations but on a consular basis. The only way the Syrians would permit negotiations to take place was through the Italians and with me, as the consular officer. So that is an example of a very political world in which a consular officer can find himself.

Q: *How did you deal with this case, the military attaché?*

MORGAN: In ways that are traditional and ways that aren't. The traditional way is through the Italian representative. Of course you found out all you could about the charges against the attaché. But unfortunately, the good major in question did himself in. He had an Official passport for his Beirut assignment which he used initially to identify himself. When he saw the pressures coming, he pulled out his other passport, Diplomatic, which showed him as the attaché in Amman, Jordan, which, of course, he wasn't yet.

Q: *He was an Arabic language and area student.*

MORGAN: Yes, exactly. He had been assigned to Jordan, but he hadn't got there yet. So he just did a whole series of extraordinarily contradictory and suspicious things that if you're caught doing them, is bad enough. But if you're by Syrian intelligence agents who are convinced that an American attaché is obviously working not only for the Defense Department, but for the CIA and for the Israeli Government and Lord knows for whom else. I mean, they have no alternative but to throw the book at you.

But back to your opening question. The first method of dealing with the Syrians was through the normal traditional diplomatic route via the Italians. The other was through the not-normal route. You dealt, as we know now too well as a result of the hostage situations, with all kinds of factions in Lebanon. You contacted the Shiites, the Christians, you dealt with the Druze, and with anyone on all levels of authority. You had the help of the political section and at other times you dealt with the contacts individually. I mean, there were occasions when the Italian protector would come to Beirut, and we'd literally meet in a park, because we knew that G-2 the Syrian intelligence authorities were an extraordinarily enterprising group, and maybe had techniques better than the KGB in some ways. At certain sensitive times you couldn't afford to use telephones or even meet in each other's embassies. So you dealt in all sorts of ways. You had to strike a deal with the Syrians, is what it amounted to, and a deal was finally arranged.

I went to the border where the Italian rep brought the liberated Major to the Lebanese side. LeCarre stuff! He was all beaten up and his teeth were knocked out. He was in bad condition.

As a tangential consular story, his mother had been with him in Beirut over the previous year. She was frequently in my section, "What are you doing? What is the latest? Why don't you get my son out?" This was of course understandable. She came the day after we got him back. He was in the hospital, actually evacuated by an Army plane to Wiesbaden. She insisted on staying behind in Lebanon. She liked her digs there and so on. She walked in and said, "I want you to arrange for my going to Damascus as a tourist. I want to go to the Souks and do some shopping." That's right. One can't believe what people will do nor how a consular officer must keep his cool at all times.

Q: *I just raised my eyebrows.*

MORGAN: You raised your eyebrows. (Laughter) I did more than that to her. I think that's one of the times I might have lost my cool in my profession. (Laughter) But what I'm trying to say here is -- that you can take such an isolated, perhaps dramatic and sexy story, but they occur repeatedly in our trade. The chief of the consular section, be it in a country like Lebanon, or in most countries, are frequently faced with issues which have real political and diplomatic aspects or implications. How you negotiate with the government over all kinds of issues is a daily job challenge.

Q: *Deals were being struck.*

MORGAN: Well, deals are normal. I don't want to make them shady.

Q: *No, but I'm saying there is a negotiating process.*

MORGAN: You're a diplomat. You work for the Foreign Service. You are a part of U.S.-X country relations, and the consular function isn't just adjudicating visas, fending off or evaluating influence brought to bear on a visa issuance. It's rather the flow of people, questions of brain drain. The French, for example, used to enjoy discussing with me our visa processing, how our sections were set up, how we handled refugees, how you allow French diplomats to work in the U.S. So you've got a non-technical aspect of consular work that, to me, is fundamental to the consular function. Call it political, call it managerial or whatever you want. But it relates to a country-to-country relationship, at times becoming sensitive, and certainly involving other elements of the embassy.

Going back to your very opening question, it isn't hard to establish good relationships in a Mission. These come naturally over issues of mutual concern. All you have to do is prove yourself competent to deal with your colleague on a basis of mutual interest and respect. In other words, understand what the political implications are. If you don't, if you say, "That's political. I don't understand it," or "That's an economic issue," or "That's a commercial issue," you've just sealed your fate. Then you are a technician. You might as well go back "down" to your section and forget it. But in so doing you're not performing your total job.

G. CLAY NETTLES
Economic Officer
Beirut (1970-1972)

George Clay Nettles was born in 1932 in Alabama. He attended the University of Alabama for both a bachelors and a law degree after serving in the US Army. Nettles joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served overseas in Japan, Vietnam, Venezuela, Lebanon, Pakistan, Zaire, Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as attending the NATO Defense College. Nettles was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1997.

Q: Where did you go after Harvard?

NETTLES: To Beirut in 1970 which I should say was my favorite assignment. I liked the job ok, but as far as a place to live it was my favorite.

Q: Well, part of that was timing, you would agree?

NETTLES: Of course, timing is everything.

Q: You went in 1970 and what sort of work did you do? You were an economic officer?

NETTLES: Yes, and my specific responsibility was petroleum reporting for the entire Middle East. That may sound a little odd, but it was easier to get information in Beirut about what was going on in Saudi Arabia then it was in Saudi Arabia itself. There were a number of consultants - Middle East Economic Review, for example, was based in Beirut. It was a very open society and economy.

Q: You went there about the same time as so-called "Black September" in Amman which led to many Palestinians coming.

NETTLES: I believe that's not quite accurate. There were a lot of Palestinians in Lebanon, but they were there dating back to the initial fighting in what is Israel today. The "Black September" took place only in Jordan. I had a good friend in the Jordanian embassy in Washington. He went back on home leave while I was in Beirut. He and a friend, a major from the Jordanian army, called at my office in the U.S. embassy. My friend had gone to school at AUB (American University of Beirut). As we were sitting in my office, he said, "Who would have thought only a few years ago that I was outside throwing stones at this very window." I asked my friend, who was on his way back to the States after home leave, "How did you find things in Jordan?" He said there was a much sharper division between the Palestinians in Jordan and the native Jordanians. Then he turned to his friend and said, "I've been away in the States. What do you think?" His friend, the major, said, "Yes, there is going to be a showdown soon and it is going to be bitter, but we will win." My friend was back six weeks later right after Black September for his mother's funeral. Because her son was a diplomat and her husband had been a senior Jordanian official, she was executed by the PLO.

Q: It was certainly a great tragedy, but didn't some Palestinians move into Beirut?

NETTLES: Not at that time. Those that were already there became much more radical. The larger camps were right on the edge of Beirut and, in fact, the largest camp of all was between the airport and Beirut itself. They would frequently block the roads. The Palestinians living there became more radicalized and the PLO became more influential with them, but there was no mass migration from Jordan or other areas into Lebanon.

Q: As I recall the civil war in Beirut began about 1975 which was a few years after you were there. You talk about Beirut as being an ideal place, great living, very cosmopolitan crossroads of the Middle East. Did you see anything like a civil war conflict situation?

NETTLES: When I arrived in Beirut there were tensions and people were apprehensive about the future. First of all, there were all these Palestinians in the country and there were bitter rivalries between essentially religious groups. As I'm sure you know, the French had favored the Christians, particularly the Maronite community. The French were basically responsible for a form of government whereby the President of Lebanon was always a Maronite Christian, the number two in the government was always a Sunni Muslim and the number three was always a Shiite Muslim. This was based upon a census taken, I believe, in 1938. Since then the population mix had changed. The Muslims were a majority. Yet the Maronites were still basically controlling the country. The Palestinians who were living there were almost entirely Muslim. A major reason they were not integrated into the country and why they were forced to remain in the camps is that their integration would tilt the balance of power to the Muslims. It was an artificial and unstable situation. Nevertheless, the government of Lebanon said it was safe to travel throughout Lebanon, except for the southern border area, which was controlled by the Israelis or their allies.

Q: But otherwise you could circulate pretty freely around Beirut and throughout the country?

NETTLES: Yes, throughout the whole country with the exception of that southern border. And I did. The Lebanese were social, but they considered it improper to have social events on the weekends. The weekend was for the family. If you were close to them, they might invite you, but certainly official functions were considered improper for the weekend. I frequently went to Tyre, my favorite place in Lebanon, on the weekends.

Q: You were, as you said before, responsible in many ways for a kind of regional economic reporting, particularly petroleum?

NETTLES: Entirely petroleum-- petroleum regional responsibility.

Q: Did you travel at all in the wider Middle East?

NETTLES: Only once, but that is a particularly interesting trip. The British were preparing to withdraw from the Trucial states in the Persian Gulf and we were going to open a post there. So the Department invited posts within the area to send an officer on an orientation visit, and I was selected to go from Lebanon. We met, the four of us, in Bahrain, where an officer, John

Countryman, from the consulate in Dhahran, which had the responsibility of reporting for the Trucial states, joined us and was our escort through all the Trucial states except Fujairah.

Q: At that point we did not yet have embassies or posts?

NETTLES: No, we were preparing to open them. In connection with that, I went down a few days earlier to visit Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where the major oil facilities were. In addition, once when there was a personnel problem in Saudi Arabia, I was sent there for four months as the acting economic/commercial counselor at our embassy, which was at that time in Jeddah.

Q: So you were actually on the staff there for four months on a temporary basis?

NETTLES: Yes, but frankly, four months was just about the right amount of time to spend in Saudi Arabia in my opinion. I was glad to go and I was glad to leave. It's not an easy place, but many people do like it.

Q: Again, this was before the oil shock-- the OPEC increase in oil prices which, I think, happened after the 1973 war. So you were there from '70-'72? Did you see anything like that on the horizon in terms of what could happen in the oil market that was vulnerable?

NETTLES: Yes, nothing quite like that, but, periodically, a major pipeline which ran from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon would be blocked. It was called Tapline and it was owned by ARAMCO.

Q: ARAMCO?

NETTLES: For years it had been a major conduit for the export of Saudi oil and periodically it would be cut. Well, of course, there were tankers to take the oil around South Africa, but that increased the time by about at least 400% because of the longer distance. Whenever it was cut there would immediately be repercussions on the international market and prices would shoot up. It was very indicative of how finely the balance of the supply of oil was. We realized that, should there be any major disturbance, then the repercussions would be horrendous.

Q: At times when the pipeline was cut, was it because of terrorist activity or accidents?

NETTLES: Both, but they were prepared for that and usually it would be repaired within 48 hours. However, there was one period when Tapline was closed for about six weeks as I recall, but I believe that was in connection with Black September. I'm not 100% certain why that occurred.

Q: As you say, many of the companies and many of the analysts of the Middle East petroleum scene were in Beirut. You saw lots of them all the time and did a lot of reporting, I'm sure.

NETTLES: Yes, communications were good. There was no place so open in the Middle East.

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Q: Besides it was a very beautiful, very pleasant place?

NETTLES: Yes. The people were friendly, you were able to get away for the weekend - the

climate was pleasant, good restaurants, good hotels - very pleasant.

Q: Okay, anything else we should say about your two years in Beirut from 1970 to 1972.

NETTLES: Not really, other than to say that it was my favorite post.

CHARLES O. CECIL
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1971-1973)

Ambassador Cecil was born in Kentucky into a US military family and was raised at several military bases in the US and abroad. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He entered the Foreign Service in 1966. A trained Arabic Language speaker, the Ambassador served abroad in Kuwait, Dar es Salaam, Beirut, Jeddah, Bamako, Muscat, Tunis and Abidjan. He was US Ambassador to Niger from 1996 to 1999. He also had several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC. Ambassador Cecil was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006

Note: Subsequently, Ambassador Cecil served as Chargé d'affaires of the US Interest Section of the Belgian Embassy in Tripoli, Libya from 2006 to 2009.

Q: Today is the 23rd of November 2007. We've had quite a hiatus, but we're back at it again. Chuck, you've left Tanzania, and you went to Beirut….

CECIL: I applied for Arabic language training in Beirut and got it. No necessity this time of threatening to take a year's leave without pay and do something else. The Department assigned me to Beirut where the language school was in those days. After home leave, we arrived in Beirut in September of 1971. In discussing the Beirut assignment I think there are three areas we should touch on:
—Embassy support
—Language instruction at FSI
—Trips made outside Lebanon while being a language student.

So let's start with some "quality of life" issues.

Q: You were taking Arabic from what, '71 to...

CECIL: Seventy three. Sixteen months, September '71 to January '73. Lebanon was calm in those days. It was an idyllic place, no hints of a civil war. That happened after I left, but it was a calm period, and we enjoyed our time there.

We left Zanzibar in the summer of 1971; I believe it was July. We had home leave and then showed up in Beirut on the 13th of September 1971. Our household effects arrived in Beirut five

and a half months after we left Zanzibar. They went the long way around Africa or something. They came just ten days before Christmas in ’71.

I was assigned to our Foreign Service Institute field school for Arabic language training. The second year of Arabic in those days was in our embassy in Beirut, the building that was subsequently demolished in a bombing. Because I had got myself tested in Arabic after my Kuwait assignment and got an S2/R1+ from my work in the post language program, Washington decided that I didn’t need that first year in Washington at FSI, so they assigned me directly to Beirut for the second year. I have always regretted that I had been tested after Kuwait because I would have preferred to have the full 22 months course. In any case, I went straight to Beirut and I was there from 13 September ’71 until January of ’73, so I had about 15 months study there at FSI.

Beirut provides another example of Foreign Service life and administrative support, an example of how things have changed over the years. Beirut was the only post I ever served at of my nine posts where we were given a housing allowance and sent out to find our own accommodations. Every other post I served in I was assigned housing. We found a very nice apartment in the area of Beirut called Ramlat al-Beida, maybe a 20 to 30 minute bus ride from the embassy which is how used to go to work. It was a four bedroom unfurnished apartment without air conditioning, but the embassy provided window units for us.

It was an eight story apartment building owned by a Saudi citizen, but he was from the Hadramaut in Yemen. Salem Bah Mihriz was his name. He and his family lived on the top two floors, the seventh and eighth floors, a penthouse arrangement, but the other six floors were all rented by American Embassy families, so we felt like a small, mutually-supportive community. Each apartment occupied a full floor. It was very nice. It was across the street from a marble factory. They started their diamond saws at 5:00 a.m. every morning, so it would assure that we would be up early and on our way to work. Our building overlooked a Palestinian refugee camp in an open area next door.

We arrived with our son Thomas. When we arrived in September, Thomas was almost one year old. When we found our apartment and asked for the embassy to furnish it, they did give us the basic furniture and appliances, but they didn’t provide a baby crib. That surprised us because in Zanzibar the embassy in Dar Es Salaam had sent a baby crib over to us for the first nine months there. So I inquired. I said, “We do need a baby crib.” I was told by the GSO, “Oh, no. We don’t provide baby cribs. It’s not allowed. You’ll have to go buy your own baby crib.” Because we needed a quick solution, in the end that’s what we did. We bought our baby crib for our one-year-old. With another child soon on the way, I pursued this issue. The GSO bucked it up to the admin officer, and the admin officer reaffirmed that it was not allowed to provide baby cribs as part of the furnishings. He justified his position by going to the FAM—Foreign Affairs Manual, a collection of our regulations—where there’s a section that says, “Furnished quarters will be provided the following:” If you go down that list you’ll find everything from refrigerators to sofas to chairs, and you’ll find the word “bed.” The admin officer in Beirut said, “See? There’s no mention of cribs there.”

I was ticked off by that, and I wrote a letter to AFSA (the American Foreign Service Association). I was always a member and a strong believer in AFSA.

Q. That's a union….

CECIL: ...a professional association and union representative.

I said, "There's a discrepancy here between embassy practices, clearly. One bureau, at least, thinks it's okay, and the other bureau doesn't seem to." I got a nice letter back from Herman Cohen who at the time was chairman of the AFSA Members' Interests Committee. He was assigned to Kampala, where I think he was Admin Officer at the time, though it could be that he had been Admin Officer in an earlier assignment.

Q: It could be Hank Cohen.

CECIL: Yes, Hank Cohen. He later went on to be Assistant Secretary for African affairs. He said clearly he had used embassy funds to purchase baby cribs for other families, and he had never been called to account. He undertook to write the Admin Officer in Beirut about that. We wound up buying a second crib in Beirut, but hopefully those who came after us were able to benefit from a more liberal interpretation, probably after the arrival of a new Admin Officer.

Another Admin Officer that I later met said, "Well, if you use a little common sense, a bed for a baby is a crib, and that's all the justification you need." For the rest of my career, I'm afraid I was guilty of separating admin officers into two categories. There are those who say, "Let me see what the FAM says. If it says I can do it, I'll do it." There are others who say, "Let me see what the FAM says, and as long as it doesn't say I can't do it, I'll do it." As I went through future assignments I often applied the baby crib test to categorize Admin Officers because they do sometimes fall into those two different categories. Officers who are unsure of themselves will opt for the literal, by-the-book interpretation. More confident officers will apply common sense.

Q: You said you had another child on the way?

CECIL: Yes, a daughter born in Beirut in May of '72 at AUB Hospital.

Q: American University Beirut.

CECIL: Right. Perfectly modern, competent. Lebanese doctors. My wife was very happy with her pediatrician. We had no problems there as far as medical care was concerned.

Q. Let's talk about the language program. How did you find the training there?

CECIL: That's a good question. It planted a seed of interest in language teaching methodology. I had been quite fascinated by FSI's methods when I studied Swahili in Washington under Dr. Earl Stevick. Dr. Stevick was a leader in the field of language teaching methodology. Perhaps I was spoiled by his Swahili course because when I got to Beirut I found that the methods were rather old-fashioned and certainly not very innovative. The program as you probably know was 30 hours a week in class; in other words, six hours a day in class, five days a week and at least two hours homework every evening. It was very much a full-time program.

But when I arrived I found that FSI Beirut was still using FSI textbooks that relied on transliteration of the Arabic script into the Roman alphabet. I thought that there was no place for transliteration in our study program. In my view it was a crutch that simply slowed down and hampered our gaining the ability to read Arabic script. Also, the course was heavily into Palestinian Arabic and Lebanese Arabic, lots of dialect. The school had a lot of materials dealing with Lebanese colloquial Arabic. Our teachers, after all, were all either Lebanese or Palestinian, every one of them, so it's maybe natural that that's what we would be learning in Beirut. But I thought the emphasis on local dialect was misguided.

Q: What type of Arabic were you...

CECIL: FSI has always claimed to teach what they called "Modern Standard Arabic." It's the language of the radio news broadcasts. It's not classical Arabic and not literary Arabic, but it's the Arabic that if you turn on the BBC and listen to the news being broadcast in Arabic or if you turn on Beirut radio and listen to the news or watch television, it's the Arabic of the news broadcasts. It's a formalized Arabic which is standard throughout the Arab world. There's a difference between the spoken language and the written language and the language used in formal presentations like at a university lecture or a political speech or a news broadcast. That's a more formal kind of Arabic.

At the end of the 15 months, I came out with an S3 Plus, R3 Plus. The FSI director noted on my final report I almost made four in both cases but didn't quite do it. My experience at FSI Beirut planted the seeds of interest in language teaching methodology that led me to seek the assignment, thirteen years later, as director of the FSI Arabic school, which by then had been moved to Tunis because of the Lebanese civil war. We'll talk about that assignment later.

Q: What was your motivation, and that of your fellow students?—and your attitude toward Israel?

CECIL: I don't think anyone asks for Arabic language training because they're anti-Israeli. It could be that if you study the issues at stake in that part of the world, you eventually come to the conclusion that we're paying a high cost for the policy that has been the policy of our administrations since the time of Harry Truman. One might reach that conclusion eventually.

I don't know why Foreign Service Officers want to study Arabic except that it's a fascinating part of the world. It certainly can cause you difficulties in your career, a lot of criticism, criticism by journalists. Joseph Kraft was one prominent journalist in my younger years who used to criticize State Department Arabists. I think we were all—almost all—very serious and all looking forward to many assignments in the Arab world.

Q. Were you picking up through your course some anti-Israeli, pro-Palestinian moods, attitudes? Was that infecting you or your... This has been one of the charges that has been leveled at Arabists, particularly in the earlier days.

CECIL: I don't think there was anything in the course of instruction that contributed to that. I had studied two years at SAIS before joining the Foreign Service, a program that straddled African and

Middle Eastern studies, actually looking at Islam in Black Africa, but I had taken pretty standard background courses on the Middle East.

I had written an article which I published under a pseudonym before entering the Foreign Service about our national interests in the Middle East. I was already of the persuasion that our policies were not serving our national interests in the area. I thought we were unduly deferential to Israeli objectives and were not genuinely pursuing our own interests. I didn't need any guidance. I had already inclined in that direction. I will say, though, when we talk about the trip to Israeli that I made while in Beirut, that I came back from Israel greatly impressed by what the Israelis had achieved. I thought the Arabs came off clearly as somewhat inept and certainly inefficient in trying to manage their own affairs.

Q. Tell me about that trip.

CECIL: The Beirut school at that time had travel funds to promote regional orientation and familiarity. And it was a policy that every student should make an orientation visit to Israel. It wasn't an absolute requirement, but it was strongly encouraged. That was very useful. Not only did we go to Israel, but from time to time in the course we were given travel money and were told, basically, "Get out now in the real world and try out what you've been learning in the classroom. Go take a trip somewhere and survive on this Arabic." In addition to my trip to Israel I spent four weeks in the Arabian Gulf area, almost two weeks in Sudan, and three days in Syria. My trip to Israel was in November and December 1971—about ten days in all. After a week of official orientation my wife joined me for another three or four days.

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Q: During the time you were taking the language, what was the situation in Lebanon? I realize you were concentrating on language, but was it a quiet period in Lebanon?

CECIL: It was. You could see the seeds of what was about to happen. As an example, the eight-story apartment building we lived in looked down on a Palestinian refugee camp. Right below us. Right just on the other side of a wall.

Q: Sabra and Shatila, or one of those?

CECIL: Not far away. This was not Sabra and Shatila that we looked down on, but that was on the way out toward the airport. People were living in this camp, almost primitive conditions, coming and going, living in tents, living in little houses made out of sheet metal and corrugated metal and packing crates and things like that. You could easily see that they couldn't be very happy and that clearly they didn't regard themselves as very settled. They all always, of course, talked about going home to Palestine.

Q: As you were doing this, did you have any look at the Palestinian people? Did you get any feel for the Palestinian refugees, why Lebanon has turned out to be a major problem?

CECIL: I guess I would have to say that I didn't cultivate Palestinians, certainly not those in the

camp next to my apartment building. A couple of our language teachers were Palestinian. We had some association with professional Palestinians: doctors, teachers. But the kind of Palestinian living in refugee camps I don't think I ever met except occasionally one or two walking past the door of the apartment building. We would have very brief conversations.

Q: But it was an issue you were looking at?

CECIL: I would be surprised if the embassy wasn't looking at it, but I was not there as a reporting officer. I spent all my time in language studies or on regional orientation trips. I have to beg off and say it's not something I focused on, but I would be surprised if the embassy wasn't following it very closely.

Q: Did you pick up any feel for Arab political foes?

CECIL: I'm not sure what you mean.

Q: I think that Nasser was dead by this time, ___ .

CECIL: Yes, he died in September 1970. Certainly in the 70s the Arab world had not yet accepted the existence of Israel and was still talking a very brave, aggressive line. It was before the '73 war that we're talking about. They talk a very aggressive line and Nasser had based a lot of his appeal on combat and on the defeat of the Egyptian army in the 1948 war. That's part of what led to Nasser coming to power. It's only in more recent decades that the Arabs have become more realistic about the possibilities open to them and a number of the governments, Egypt and Jordan and even Saudi Arabia now, have stated their willingness to accept Israel. Jordan was one of the first to negotiate peace agreements. That's gradually evolved. Back in the '60s and early '70s no, I don't think that was acceptable in Arab political discourse. They didn't even use the word "Israel."

Q: So what did you do after Arabic studies?

CECIL: In January of '73 we went to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia where I was Pol/Mil (Political/Military) Officer, so that would be a good place to pick up next time. Before doing that though, I might mention two other points briefly.

One was that my time in Beirut convinced me that I wanted to avoid serving in large embassies. Probably compared to many of our western European embassies, Beirut wasn't all that large, but still it was a multiple of the size of Kuwait or Dar-es-Salaam. I felt that I wanted to serve in small embassies so I could be really involved in things and have a broad area of responsibility. I felt that in the large embassy in Beirut it must be difficult to know everything that was going on and to coordinate with colleagues. Through the rest of my career had a preference for small or, maybe later, medium size embassies, but I always wanted to avoid the large ones.

As I neared the end of my course I was supposed to be assigned to Muscat. We were going to open an embassy there in the summer of '72, a few months after my visit. Our ambassador was in Kuwait in those days, accredited down the Gulf. We were sending a chargé to open up in Muscat, a fellow named Pat Quinlan. He and his wife passed through Beirut and met me and my wife. We

probably were going to Muscat. He offered me the job as his Number Two. It was probably going to be a three-man post. I was going to be called Economic Commercial Officer but would have ample opportunity to do political reporting. I am a political officer, so that was important to me. I was absolutely fascinated by the country and the idea of going.

In the end the assignment didn't happen. After the chargé had been there a short time, he sent me a message through his admin officer who was on his way back to the States, asking for my comments on the proposed apartment that they planned to rent for us. It was extremely modest. It had no bathtub, for instance. It had only a shower. It had no storage space, no closets, and the building itself had no storage space. A washing machine they would provide would have to be out on the balcony of the apartment. Since he asked for my comments, I sent back a series of comments basically saying, "If this choice has been mandated by the department's failing to give you enough money to rent something better, then I think you should go back and ask for more money." Certainly with two small children under the age of three, having a bathtub is a fairly important thing at that point. In general it seemed like an extremely small apartment they were going to put us in.

I got an answer back which I found very curt and abrupt. Basically he said, "I think you need to decide if you really want this assignment or not." I didn't like that. I thought this is not the basis for a mutually supportive relationship that I want to go into in such a small post. I replied to him by saying "I don't think I can go under these circumstances. Please consider my assignment broken." I sent a copy of my message to the Department. I was out of line doing that, and the Department later told me so in a very strong letter I got from a man named Hunter Estep who told me it was the Department that makes or breaks assignments, not the officers concerned.

In any case, they accepted that I wouldn't be going. There was a period of a few weeks or maybe a couple of months that I didn't know where I was going. In the end, suddenly I found myself assigned in Jeddah as Pol-Mil officer: political military officer. We went there in January of '73 right after Christmas.

Looking back I would say certainly on the one hand I regret not going to Muscat in 1972 or early '73. It would have been a fascinating opportunity to see the country in the very beginning stages of opening up to the West. I presume in a post that small I might have gotten to know Sultan Qaboos who was almost exactly my age. That might have laid the foundation for a later assignment farther on in my career.

On the other hand it would have been a lot like Zanzibar in that it was a three or four man post, and I had just done that in Zanzibar, a little bit of everything, jack of all trades, but master of none. Going to Jeddah gave me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge of a particular specialty, political-military affairs. It gave my expertise more depth than I probably would have acquired in Muscat. As we'll see when to talk about Jeddah I think on the whole it was the best thing for me. The ambassador and the DCM were two of the best Arabists in the Service and I learned a tremendous amount from them, in addition to acquiring experience in the most important country on the peninsula.

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Q: Were we concerned about Islam as being a potential force? Not necessarily because of the religion but politically.

CECIL: We knew where the numbers were. The government of Cote d'Ivoire would not admit that it had a Muslim majority. They did not want to have a census. It's like Lebanon.

Q: Lebanon is still working on making a census.

CECIL: Our data, which I think probably relied mostly on UN sources, led us to believe that Muslims are probably between 52 to 55% of the country. Nowadays it's hard for me to say, "Did that include all those migrants from the northern countries: Mali, Niger, and so on?" It probably did, I'm not sure. But in any case we could see the demographics, and it was pretty clear to us that Islam was clearly spreading. When I was a graduate student at SAIS in 1962 to '64, I was studying Islam in Black Africa, and I wrote my masters thesis on the influence of Islam on Nigeria. It was clear to me 30 years later that the visible presence of Islam was much greater than it had been even in the '60s. There were mosques everywhere. It was just clear that the Muslim faith was spreading. We did not regard it in Cote d'Ivoire as a source of any fundamentalist threat. It's hard to generalize, but I would say that my experience in Cote d'Ivoire and even later in Niger a few years later showed me that by and large West African Islam is a very tolerant Islam. It's very synchretic. It incorporates a lot of indigenous beliefs into practices, even into the architecture. I have a color slide of a little tiny minaret on the road between Abidjan and Grand-Bassam, a little town where foreigners go to go to the beach on weekends. There was a row of handicraft vendors along the road at that time, and this was their mosque. Around the minaret was a little railing made out of cement, concrete, and the railing consisted of the stools of Akan chiefs or Baulé chiefs. The stool is the seat of authority and maybe even the soul. It's a wonderful example of the incorporation of an African traditional belief into the architecture of an Islamic religions building.

The other side of that is certainly in northern Nigeria there has been a lot of evidence of fundamentalist Islam and riots between the Christians and Muslims, so you can't generalize and say it's tolerant everywhere. Ivorian Muslims certainly seemed to me at the time to be very tolerant and not at all dogmatic about their beliefs.

ROBERT B. OAKLEY
Political Counselor
Beirut (1971-1974)

Ambassador Robert B. Oakley was born in 1931 in Texas. He graduated from Princeton University in 1952 and served in the US Navy until 1955. Oakley joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served overseas in Sudan, the Ivory Coast, Vietnam, France, Lebanon, and as Ambassador to Zaire, Somalia and Pakistan. In Washington DC, Oakley served in the Office of UN Political Affairs, the Bureau of East Asian Affairs, as the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and for the National Security Council. Oakley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kenney and Thomas

Stern in 1992.

Q: *After your tour at the UN, you were assigned in 1971 to Beirut as the Political Counselor. How did that assignment come about?*

OAKLEY: It was a lucky assignment. Beirut at the time was calm and as I think most observers will vouch, it was a very lovely city with great places to eat, swim, and enjoy life. I don't think the Oakleys ever found a better place. Bill Buffum, for whom I worked in NY, became our Ambassador to Lebanon and he asked that I join his staff. I remember the advice I received from my first ambassador, Jimmy Moose; he said: "What will become of you in your Foreign Service career will be determined by the time it is all over in equal proportions by three factors: what you know, who you know, and luck!" In the case of Beirut, it was that someone whom I knew had some appreciation for my abilities - or potential - and asked me to become the Embassy's Political Counselor.

I knew very little about the Lebanon situation before the assignment was made. I didn't have much briefing either; as usual it was "hurry up and get there" - as all my assignments have been. I have always envied those who had time for language and area training. As I said, Buffum was the Ambassador; Bob Houghton was the DCM. Bob was the "Arabist;" neither Buffum or I were.

In the early 1970s, we were not interested so much in Lebanon. We still viewed Lebanon as a side show in the Middle East. There was some U.S. interest in Lebanese commercial opportunities because at this time, Lebanon was the cross-roads for Middle East commercial traffic. After the 1973 war, with the major spike in oil prices, we began to deal directly with the Persian Gulf states and other countries that until then had been reluctant to deal directly with the U.S. because of the Arab-Israel conflict. So until then, Lebanon was the center of our economic relations with Arab states. Egyptian, Saudi, Jordanian, Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and commercial people like bankers used to come to Beirut to transact business. By the time I left, the reduction in the importance of Lebanon as a commercial center was really beginning, in part as I said because of the opening of the Arab world to the U.S. which included the infusion of sizeable investments. Then came the Lebanese civil war, which certainly reduced and practically eliminated that country from commercial activities. But in the early 1970s, our main interests in Lebanon were still commerce.

This U.S. focus probably led to some feeling in the Embassy that it was being somewhat neglected by Washington. But both Buffum and I recognized that it was hard for us - in a post considered not central to U.S. foreign policy - to have our views taken very seriously by senior officials in Washington. I always had an aversion to claiming that my post was the center of the universe; so did Buffum. So we accepted our lot and didn't mount any campaign for "greater recognition."

Beneath the surface calm, there were many rivalries in Lebanon. There was some terrorism, primarily conducted by one group of Palestinians or another. They used Lebanon as their home base; more specifically, the refugee camps were the breeding grounds both for recruitment and for base of operations. Organizations like the Japanese Red Army, the Italian Red Brigades, the Armenian terrorist groups in addition to the Palestinian groups used the camps as "home base." There were tensions between the Palestinians and the Lebanese government, which at the time was dominated by the Maronite Christians. There were tensions between the Maronites and the

Lebanese Sunni and the Shiites - the Muslims groups. The Sunnis had some influence at the time; the Shiites practically none. These tensions were evident in the early 1970s although they had not yet exploded in open combat. The Maronites opposed strongly all Palestinian activities within Lebanon; they would have preferred to have the Palestinians leave the country. The Sunnis on the other hand defended the Palestinians. The division of political power [between Christians and Muslims] was based on a census that had taken place decades earlier, which was obviously outdated, but was accepted by all parties as politically expedient. As I said, the tensions were beneath the surface.

My wife and I had been in Beirut about two weeks when we were invited for dinner at his house by a Maronite deputy, who lived about half way up the mountain which separated Beirut from Alay. The deputy's son and daughter - both in their 20s - joined us for dinner and we had a wonderful evening. We spoke French, had French wine, French food. The son had graduated from a law school in Paris; the daughter was a graduate of a French medical school. After dinner, former President Chamoun joined us along with some of his militiamen - all dressed in their "tiger" suits. They sat down and had a great time reminiscing about the events of the previous year; they had used this house to plan and conduct an ambush of a Palestinian funeral courtege that was winding its way back to Beirut from the Bekaa Valley. A few hundred yards from this house was an S curve in the mountainous road, which forced traffic to come almost to a full stop to navigate the road. The Maronites at the dinner bragged how they had killed thirty Palestinians and had wounded forty of them; they thought it had been a great evening's work. I was flabbergasted; on the way home, I commented to Phyllis that I could not comprehend how civilized our hosts had been and yet at the same time could relish their participation in a human slaughter. I had a hard time comprehending this dichotomy in their personality. At the time, as I have said, open internal hostilities amongst Lebanese had not yet broken out, but that evening was a real lesson for me about what was going on beneath the apparent calm political atmosphere in Lebanon. I was also convinced that the Chamoun appearance, which caught me entirely by surprise, was obviously staged for my benefit as was the after dinner conversation. This bizarre episode left an impression; no doubt about that. I wondered what kind of a strange world Lebanon really was - from a civilized French atmosphere one minute to the middle ages the next!

This Lebanese chameleon quality repeated itself several times during our tour. One faction or another was always trying to impress us with their power. In the story I just related, not only was I meant to understand the Maronite power, but obviously I was also to be impressed by the deputy's relationship to Chamoun. All of us Americans at the Embassy were courted by the various Lebanese factions and individuals. The U.S. was viewed as a mighty power and the Christians, at least, as well as some Sunnis who were part of the establishment hoped - and some probably really believed - that we would protect them. The French were similarly viewed as protectors of the *status quo*. Of course, we were also viewed as the "issuers of visas" - a commodity in great demand.

We were always being solicited by one group or another to intercede on its behalf. I remember that on one occasion, the Station Chief and I sat down to discuss the political situation. We agreed that the U.S. would be very wise not to have any direct linkages to any of the political groups. CIA, based on the Station Chief's recommendations, directed that direct, covert relationships with certain Christian groups, which had been in existence for years and years, be terminated. The

Phalange was the group that had had the closest relationship to the CIA. I thought that the Agency had taken the right action because we had come to the conclusion that - given the widespread foreign involvement in Lebanon political affairs - including the Egyptians, the Israelis, the Saudis, the Syrians, the Iraqis, the Iranians and others - the more we became involved with one group or another the less influence we would have overall because other powers would more than match our own efforts, thereby starting a race for influence that we could probably not win. Therefore, it became clear to us that the wiser course was for the U.S. to keep its distance from all groups and appear to be more of a neutral observer and not so much an active participant in Lebanese politics.

I might just describe an incident at this stage which illustrates my point. One of the owners of a large English-language newspaper invited the Oakleys to have dinner with him. Phyllis and I had a great conversation with him. At one stage, he began to complain how the U.S. was corrupting the freedom of the Lebanese press by funneling assistance to one or another of his competitors. I explained to him, as emphatically as I could, that history notwithstanding, I could categorically assure him that at that time neither the CIA nor any other part of the U.S. government was providing any funds or assistance to any Lebanese newspapers. The next morning, I got a note from him suggesting that since we were not supporting any of his rivals, would we consider putting some money into his newspaper!

There were a lot of myths about the U.S. in Lebanon at the time. That had been historically true and was true for many years after I left. We had no hopes of killing the rumors and the misperceptions, but we hoped that we might change the realities. The Station Chief was instrumental in this effort. When one of his people was transferred, the replacement never picked up his predecessor's links to certain Lebanese individuals. It was easier for the Political Section because we had never had any operational role and therefore under the new U.S. policy did not have to change our behavior. Tom Carolan was my deputy; he was a wonderful “Arabist”. He was very useful; he finally managed to restore the Arab language training program in Beirut. He was also instrumental in restoring a program of Arab specialists in the Foreign Service when he joined the Office of Personnel after his tour in Lebanon.

Despite the surface calm, we were always concerned about the political stability of Lebanon. The problems in Lebanon revolved around four factors: religion, personalities, outside meddling of other governments in support of specific factions and ambitions for power. These four factors played off against each other. It was an obvious cauldron waiting to boil over. There was always some unease because there were many small clashes and frictions between groups - even within the Muslim and Christian communities. In 1972, there was a major confrontation between the PLO and the Lebanese government, which could have reached the level of intensity that occurred in 1970 when the King of Jordan had to order his army out against the PLO there. The seeds of Lebanese confrontation started in the South where the PLO had increasingly assumed the functions of a sovereign power. They had their own road blocks; they chased the Lebanese army and police out of the area. Finally two good friends of mine - the Army's Assistant Chief for Intelligence and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations - persuaded the Army Chief who in turn persuaded the President of Lebanon to allow them to conduct a raid on the PLO headquarters, which was then located in the refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila - located between downtown Beirut and the international airport. The President stewed over the recommendation for a long time; he finally approved. The Lebanese army began its sweep at noon of the appointed day. By six

that afternoon, they had gone through about 2/3 of the camps, inflicting about a dozen Palestinian casualties while suffering three or four army losses. The army, composed of members of many Lebanese communities - Shiites, Sunnis, Druse, Maronites - held together admirably. The soldiers fought side by side as a single unit. There was no unrest whatsoever in the rest of Lebanon; in fact, most people were relieved that the government was finally taking a strong stand against the PLO. President Franjieh was approached that afternoon by all Arab ambassadors who complained bitterly about the army's actions. By seven that evening, he lost his nerve and recalled his troops from the camps. Included among the ambassadors was the Syrian, but in the early 1970s Syria did not have the sway over Lebanon that it subsequently mustered.

In June 1972 - a month after this raid - the Political Section managed to get a hold of a PLO "after-action" report. It admitted that the raid had almost been totally successful in destroying the PLO chain of command because it had all been centralized in Sabra-Shatila. The conclusion of this report was that the PLO headquarters would have to spread out into other camps and neighborhoods, especially the poor ones in Beirut which were mostly filled by the Shiites and some Sunnis. The arm caches were to be disbursed in many neighborhoods. The PLO was to open small offices in many neighborhoods to recruit and decentralize their operations. This same report also concluded that the PLO needed to obtain greater support from the Syrians, who had not raised a finger during the recent confrontation. It was also stated that the PLO had to be much more vigilant about the Lebanese army because the raid might occur again.

The President's decision also had an impact on the Christian communities. The more aggressive, such as the Phalange, came to the conclusion that the government then in power did not have sufficient backbone and the army was too weak to impose its will. The conclusion reached was that the Christian community would have to look to its own resources to protect its interests; that meant that Christian officers and men had to be pulled out of the army and assigned to the Christian militias. The inconclusive raid on Sabra-Shatila therefore became one of the key points in the unraveling of the Lebanese country; the splintering really began after that. I therefore consider summer of 1972 to have been the time when Lebanon really began to fall apart as a nation.

The U.S. refused to provide any significant military assistance to the Lebanese army. We provided some small arms and equipment, but it was nothing like the support we gave the Jordanian army in 1970. The Lebanese wanted the same treatment; we never did reply to their request. So military assistance became a major issue in our relations with Lebanon. I think we should have provided some arms and equipment - limited, but more than we were willing to do. I looked at the issue as a political one and felt that greater assistance was required to shore up the Lebanese army against the PLO, and to shore up President Franjieh. But at that stage Washington was preoccupied with other issues; furthermore, probably the other Arab governments would have objected to an increased assistance program to the Lebanese army to use against Palestinians. So Washington's decision was not to get involved.

I mentioned Sabra-Shatila. I visited them as well as other refugee camps. I never saw any hostile reaction by the people living there. But it was obvious that these camps were and would increasingly be the breeding ground for major problems. They were obviously over-crowded and suffering from the lack of infrastructure and employment. But having served in Africa, I probably did not have as strong a reaction than others might have had. But the contrast between the camps

and the rest of the Beirut was noticeable. Of course, the camps tended to be in poor neighborhoods, which made the contrast not quite as stark. The presence of refugee camps, the poor neighborhoods, the glitter of certain parts of Beirut just accented the wide gaps in the socio-economic conditions of the various elements of Lebanese society. Everybody understood that these wide discrepancies - particularly the refugee camps - would sooner or later be the kindling points for a major conflagration.

The only major assistance agency was UNRWA - a UN refugee assistance program. But in general, the Lebanese government was not interested in using its own funds or as a matter of fact having any other government or institution using their resources to alleviate the poverty in the camps. A lot of the refugees had been chased out of Jordan into Lebanon in 1970; they had crossed into Jordan from the West bank after the 1967 war. But in the early 1970s, the world's major powers had other fish to fry; they had not become fully aware of the ticking time bomb that was Lebanon. Alarm about terrorism had not yet reached the level when it could have provoked the major powers into action. There was a hijacking of aircraft and smaller terrorist actions, but the scope of terrorist activity had not yet reached the crisis point it would later.

Some of the terrorism came from Iraqi and Syrian agents fighting each other in the streets of Beirut. In the early 1970s, both Iraq and Syria vied for influence in Lebanon and especially about who would be the leader of the Baath Party. The two countries tried to resolve that issue by fighting in Lebanon; that was true for many Arab disputes - they were settled in the streets of Beirut. For example, the Iraqis and the Iranians were fighting for control of the Shiite population. Lebanon's wealth and influence made it an attractive target for foreign manipulations. I pointed out to one of my Lebanese friends one day that almost every Arab country was trying to have some influence in one or another of Lebanon's political parties. Each Arab country also seemed to have a stake in one or another of Lebanon's newspapers. These Arab countries were smuggling arms and money into Lebanon. I wondered whether my friend was not concerned about this foreign interference. He said: "No, not in the least. It is great for trade. You don't understand our history. We have always had an 'open door' policy which permitted all sorts of different groups into Lebanon. We calculate that these groups cancel each other out - and that no single one will be the most powerful and influential. In the process, we get rich!" It was a very benign view of the world which I suspect the Lebanese may have later regretted.

I had an interesting commercial experience. One of the major Lebanese banks, which collapsed, was owned in part by the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). In fact, CCC was the bank's biggest stockholder, followed by the government of Lebanon. The bank had a well-deserved reputation for being less than above board; so when it collapsed, no great harm was done, except that the U.S. was left holding the bag. Donald Nixon's son - the President's nephew - came to Beirut with an entourage which included an American wheeler-dealer. They wanted to buy the bank. There was a difference of opinion in the Embassy. There was a group, primarily the economic-commercial officers who wanted to let the deal go through. Buffum and I had great reservations; we didn't like the "smell" of it. We knew that the bank had been corrupt and that the man accompanying Nixon's nephew also did not have a savory reputation. We were trying to clean up the bank so that it could pay its debts to the legitimate customers. We weren't sure that the American buyers had the same concerns. So we plotted to have the Agricultural Attache, who represented the CCC, and the government of Lebanon postpone the offer. The bank's board met

every month. After the first meeting after the offer was tendered, the Ambassador was approached by the Legal Attaché [the FBI representative] who had a message from Mitchell, the Attorney General. The message requested that the board at its next meeting give more favorable consideration to the Nixon offer. There was also a call from Haldeman's office in the White House, making the same request. But we decided to stick to the "no action" scenario.

It was not much later that "Watergate" hit the headlines. We sent back an "innocent" cable to the Department saying that we had heard from Mitchell and Haldeman, via their intermediaries. We said that our policy was to treat the Nixon offer as we would that proffered by any American businessman. We then added that if the Department wished to have the matter treated differently, it should issue appropriate instructions to us. It was obvious that our message seemed to have hit a sore spot because we heard a lot of squawking and noise; we understood that the Attorney General's office denied that Mitchell had ever been involved. We had created a huge flap in Washington. We heard no more about the matter.

We had no contact with Israeli agents in Lebanon. One night, some Israeli commandos landed on the beaches of Beirut, found their way into town, killed three prominent PLO leaders and blew up an apartment building in the center of the city. They were never caught. We were accused of having facilitated their departure because it was popularly believed that when they retreated, they entered the Embassy compound and used a tunnel that led to the sea, where a submarine was waiting to pick them up. Otherwise, I don't think the Israelis were a factor in Lebanon in the early 1970s.

Before concluding this discussion of my tour in Lebanon, I would like to make a personal observation about which I feel very strongly. Having watched the U.S. in various places around the world - Vietnam, Sudan etc - I observed that the U.S. periodically made commitments to individuals and groups; then when these people got in trouble, we did not stand behind our commitments. I strongly believe that this was and is very poor policy. I drew a personal lesson from this observation which influenced me for the rest of my diplomatic career; I swore that as long as I had anything to do with policy development, I would never fall into that error. I made a special effort in subsequent assignments not to mislead others about support they might expect. That is why I worked with the Station Chief to bring our activities in Lebanon back to where I thought they should be; i.e. neutrality. Before I left Beirut in 1974, I made a point of calling on people like Chamoun, Gemayel, and other Lebanese leaders to say my farewells. I had known most of them as personal friends. In my farewell call, I told each that I hoped that they were not under a mistaken belief that the U.S. would send its military forces into Lebanon to help one faction or another. I predicted that such event would never occur. I opined that neither the French or the British would intervene militarily. I suggested to each of the leaders that they behave in the future with this cautionary note in mind. I added that I thought that Lebanon had a good future, even though after the 1973 war, there had been a lot of changes in the Middle East and in Lebanon. I was referring to the fact that Syria was stronger than it had been, that Saudi Arabia was opening its country to foreign investment, but I thought that nevertheless that if Lebanon could stabilize its internal political tensions, it could balance the interests of the Syrians, the Saudis and the Egyptians in such a way that it would work to Lebanon's importance. But if the Lebanese continued to maintain that they were the bastion of Western civilization, that would be a huge mistake which would not sit well with their Arab neighbors. Then I repeated my prediction that if

Lebanon was counting on U.S. military support in the event of an Arab attack, that would just compound their error in judgement. Most of my interlocutors didn't believe me; they were sure that the U.S. would come to Lebanon's aid. I repeated my prediction that we would not - and as history shows, we didn't.

Before closing my comments on my Beirut assignment, I should mention that one of my jobs there was liaison with the PLO - not directly with Arafat, but with some of his lieutenants - particularly with a Palestinian professor at the American University. I acted on Washington instructions. At one point, the professor and I were the intermediaries in the exchange of papers between Kissinger and Arafat. The papers were "non-papers"; that is to say, they had no identifying marks. There was no heading nor a signature. But they were messages that we and the professor exchanged in Beirut. This was later revealed by a PLO defector who joined the Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine using this exchange as one of the reasons he left the PLO because it allegedly showed to him that Arafat was too close to the US. I think in the period we were discussing, I was only one channel to the PLO. Undoubtedly we ran some intelligence operations, but I think I was the only official channel to the PLO. When my operation became public, Kissinger was furious and was blaming me, but I pointed out that I could not be held responsible for PLO defectors who leaked information given to them by Arafat.

Q: *Then in 1974, you were transferred to Washington to take on the job as the senior staffer on the Middle East on the Department's Policy Planning staff [S/P].*

C. WILLIAM KONTOS
Deputy Commissioner, United Nations Relief Works Administration
Beirut (1972-1974)

Ambassador C. William Kontos was born in Illinois in 1922. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. Ambassador Kontos had served in the USAID program throughout most of his Foreign Service career. His career included positions in Greece, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Pakistan, Lebanon, Israel, and an ambassadorship to Sudan. Ambassador Kontos was interviewed in 1992 by Thomas Stern.

KONTOS: I had visited Paris in the fall of 1971 for a conference. While there, I met with Stuart Van Dyke who was the U.S. Representative to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at the time. While I was sitting in his office, he received a call from someone in Washington wondering where I might be reached. So Stuart handed me the phone; the person at the other end was a senior AID official wanting to know if I would be agreeable to having the State Department put my name on a list for a senior UN position. In response to my question, the job was the Deputy Commissioner for the United Nations Relief Works Administration (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees, which was headquartered in Beirut. I told the caller that I would be back in Washington in two days, and I would be glad to discuss the matter at that time. But Washington had to know right away; so I said that it was OK to put my name on the list, but that I needed a lot more

information before I could really agree.

That was the first time I had heard about UNRWA. I found out later that the UNRWA Liaison officer in New York, a Dutch national, had worked with Bill Hall at Lake Success when the UN was being founded under Trygve Lie -- they had first worked in London then at Lake Success on setting up the UN. Jan Van Wyck, the UNRWA official, knew Bill Hall and had called him when the decision had been reached that an American should fill the Deputy position. A Britisher held the Commissioner General's job. Before this time, it had been the American that held the top job and the Briton the deputy position. Hall was then the State Department's Director General. UNRWA described the qualifications it was looking for and Bill Hall mentioned my name. Van Wyck checked it out with Beirut and got the green light to interview me. Bill then had one of his deputies call me in Paris, so that by the time the call was made, UNRWA already knew something about me. Soon after I returned to Washington, I was sent to New York to meet the new UNRWA Commissioner General, Sir John Rennie, who had been the deputy. He was a rather quiet Scotsman with long experience in the Colonial Office. He had been Governor of Mauritius and then appointed to be the deputy in UNRWA. We hit it off quite well; I heard later that other Americans were interviewed, but apparently Rennie thought my background and my State Department support put me at the head of the list. I agreed to take the job; I would be seconded to UNRWA from the Foreign Service. The American who preceded me, but as Commissioner General, had been an Under Secretary at the U.N. and was therefore part of the international civil service corps. Henry Labouisse had been the head of UNRWA before he became U.S. Ambassador to Greece. I was the first career Foreign Service officer to join the UNRWA leadership. I thought that if it were interesting, I would continue to work for UNRWA; if it did not work out, I could always return to the Foreign Service.

Joan and I arrived in Beirut early in 1972. We ran into a new experience. UNRWA's functions were to provide education, health, and some food to Palestinians who had been made refugees as result of the establishment of Israel; they lived in camps. The role of the UN and this agency, which was established in 1948, was to keep these people going pending some kind of political resolution of their status as refugees. It is important to stress that UNRWA did not run the camps; it provided services, principally education and public health, and to a diminishing degree, food for those in need. As Palestinians became more self-sufficient, even as camp residents, supply of food became less and less important and, in the end, was provided only for the very poor and pregnant women or mothers with new babies.

The camps were run by the host government where the camps were located. Camps were in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, on the West Bank, and in Gaza. The host governments, including the Israeli military authorities for the West Bank and Gaza, were responsible for security in the camps. The camps had their own internal arrangements, their own leaders and their own ways of administrating day-to-day camp activities. Our public health efforts included not only the running of clinics, but also the management of sewer and water facilities -- sanitation services of all sorts. UNRWA paid the nurses, the doctors, etc. UNRWA also ran the schools, whose teachers were employees of UNRWA. Harry Labouisse, when Commissioner General, started a few vocational education training schools and later some secondary schools that went through the junior high school level were established. As the Palestinian population grew -- rapidly, I might add -- the number of teachers had to be increased, adding to the problems of an already over-burdened

agency.

The staff which manned UNRWA headquarters was based in Beirut and consisted of a small number of international civil servants. In addition to the forty or fifty international staff at the headquarters and in the local offices, we had well over ten to fifteen thousand Palestinians working for us -- teachers, doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, administrators, etc. In each country, we had an international director. We had a Swede in Damascus, a Briton in Amman, a New Zealander in Jerusalem and an American in Gaza. They had international deputies, but the rest of their staffs were all Palestinians. The small headquarters staff in Beirut was comprised of the Commissioner General, a deputy and a small secretariat; then there was an official in charge of food distribution (a Brit), one in charge of education (an Afghan, who had been the deputy minister for education in Kabul) and one in charge of public health (a Pakistani). The General Counsel was British as was the officer in charge of public relations and fund raising. There were also heads of Transport, Refugee Registration, a Controller and a person in charge of Administration. These people had been recruited by the Agency without reference to their nationalities. There were no "quotas" although the Commissioner General did try to maintain some balance between the West and the Third World. A key man in headquarters was the Controller who put together the budget and handled finances. He was the linchpin in the chain; he was an American and very, very good.

The Agency's existence depended on voluntary contributions from UN member countries. There were no financial quotas for UNRWA from member countries. The U.S., the British, other European countries and later the EEC were major contributors with the U.S. providing the lion's share. The Arabs were at first very reluctant to give anything to UNRWA because they considered the Palestinians refugees to have been created by the establishment of Israel and hence not their responsibility. They held the West accountable for the situation and therefore expected the U.S. and Europe to provide the necessary resources. So it was always a difficult uphill battle to keep the operation solvent. The Controller had to manage the very meager resources to insure that every cent was well spent. As we approached each budget year, we projected a deficit, but somehow the Agency was kept alive by last minute stipends. Sir John Rennie, the Commissioner General, who has become a close friend, and I worked very amiably. He stayed on after my departure until he retired four years later. He was extremely active in getting new sources of money. He finally convinced the Arabs that they had to contribute because UNRWA gave the Palestinians the most important, and perhaps their sole, opportunity for education in the Arabic language; furthermore, Palestinians' well being depended on UNRWA's ability to deliver services. This argument, which I thought was persuasive, finally had its intended effect on Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and some of the other Arab countries that provided some resources, although rather modest ones. The big breakthrough was with the EEC which, as an independent entity, began to provide several million dollars worth of foodstuffs as starters -- mostly wheat and flour, rice and butter. Later on, the EEC provide cash. All was the result of John's efforts with the EEC. The U.S. maintained its level of support, increasing it modestly over the years. But in general, it was a very difficult problem to get enough money to keep the Agency alive.

Q: *In 1948, when UNRWA was established, what was the termination target for this "temporary" agency?*

KONTOS: First of all, the resettlement and/or compensation for all Palestinian refugees was its

objective. It was hoped that some would return to Israel and that the others would be compensated for their loss of land and houses. Some political solution had to be found to accommodate these refugees. Pending that day, they would be under UNRWA support system. The refugees came from all parts of what had been called Palestine -- under a British mandate. The UN declared a partition, which was rejected by the Arabs. A war ensued and Israel was successful in keeping two-thirds of Palestine. During this time, there was a great exodus of refugees into neighboring counties -- Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The people living on the West Bank of the Jordan River became residents of Jordan. Those in Gaza were under Egyptian control until 1967 when, as a consequence of another war, Israel took control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. That brought the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza under the occupation of Israeli military forces.

Q: *Was there any effort made to settle the refugees in permanent habitats?*

KONTOS: Yes, there were some attempts, but the Palestinians felt that anything short of complete return to the pre-1947 situation was unacceptable. You have to understand that in some cases, the Palestinians had left their homes with the keys still in the door locks because they felt that they would return in 48 hours. So they refused any notion of permanent settlement; that was an anathema. They wanted to return to their homes and to their ancestral lands. Therefore, any proposals for resettlement were rejected both by the refugees and by Arab countries.

Q: *What did a refugee camp look like?*

KONTOS: It varied. Some were near cities, such as Amman. As Amman grew, it absorbed these camps. Some camps consisted of cement block houses, crowded, with narrow streets and open sewers -- fetid, damp for the most part. The houses were heated by charcoal and kerosene. Some had fences around them, some did not. Most of them just became part of the landscape -- essentially ghettos. UNRWA had registered each refugee and had elaborate records on all the refugees thereby keeping the resident population from using UNRWA services. There was also a certain amount of internal policing by the refugees which also minimized any potential fraud or abuse of UNRWA services. The schools, for example, were already crowded and the refugees had no interest in letting other children use those facilities. There was probably very little incentive for non-refugees to attend those schools in any case because they were not that great. They were certainly no better than the local schools, although the way UNRWA recruited and trained teachers was in many cases better than the system used by the local school administration. All teachers and public health workers were Palestinians; they were highly motivated and for the most part well educated. In the annual examination given to all students at certain grade levels in that part of the Arab world, the kids from the UNRWA schools received higher scores than their local counterparts. The UNRWA teachers were better and that showed up in these standardized tests. The teachers followed the local curricula and agenda as dictated by the host Ministry of Education.

On the public health side, the refugees' services may have been marginally better than those received by the local population. The services were rendered by clinics which to a certain extent included extra programs on such matters as nutrition and other preventive public health efforts. That may have made the UNRWA clinics somewhat better than local facilities. But you have to remember that the Palestinians did not have any hospitals and if they were seriously ill, had to go

to a local government hospital.

Q: *Let me ask you about political issues. Did UNRWA have any difficulties with local governments?*

KONTOS: Yes, indeed. We had lots of problems. Each government presented us with different problems. Lebanon, for example, insisted that its military intelligence service be the representative of the government in the camps. These guys tended to be rough and treated the Palestinians badly. They were arrogant and difficult and in some cases even abusive. Before I got to Beirut, the Commissioner General was able to negotiate the departure of these intelligence soldiers from the camps, which permitted the control of the camps to be exercised by the Palestinians themselves with some kind of oversight by UNRWA.

Each government had sovereign jurisdiction over the camps. Any violation of local law or criminal activity came under the jurisdiction of the host government. So we had to deal with three levels of government: the local jurisdiction, the host government at a national level and the UN. And then there were informal Palestinian organizations who got involved. The UN relationship was very loose. The Commissioner General was nominally an appointee of the Secretary General, but he received no funds from the New York Secretariat. During the latter part of my tenure, however, we were able to negotiate a deal with the UN Secretariat for it to pick up the salaries of the international civil servants which relieved UNRWA from a significant expenditure. Up to that time, the voluntary contributions had paid for those salaries. After that successful negotiation, it was the UN budget that bore the salaries of the international civil servants.

Q: *Tell us something of the problems that you faced, like, I assume the demand for a continuing increasing level of services.*

KONTOS: That was certainly one of the continuing demands. It was especially true for schools which were always crowded, most of them running double shifts because there weren't enough facilities to accommodate all the children and, in light of our budget constraints, we couldn't build more schools. So we had to run two shifts -- morning and afternoon. The Palestinian children were taught in UNRWA schools through junior high. Then they either entered the local senior high school or went to work in the local economy, although this was difficult because as in the case of Lebanon, work permits were required and were hard for Palestinians to obtain.

Q: *During your tour, was there any effort to reevaluate the basic tenet that the refugees would eventually be resettled?*

KONTOS: When UNRWA was established its charter contained a call for an ultimate solution to the Palestinian problem, either through resettlement or compensation or combination of the two. This thesis was reinforced by a number of UN resolutions that called for the same solutions. These resolutions are the mandates of the world community. The Palestinian desire for a homeland and for recognition of their identity is so strong that the basic tenet did not change and has not to this day. In fact, these Palestinian desires may have intensified in the years since I left UNRWA even though the Palestinians have spread even more widely throughout the Middle East and elsewhere. I think that they have become much more realistic about their prospects of returning to their former

homes and resuming their former lives on their former lands. They realize that there is little prospect of the realization of that dream. They recognize that Israel will remain as an entity with the support of the United States; that it is militarily invulnerable. Therefore they are belatedly conceding now that certain facts exist and that they will have to settle for half a loaf -- the West bank and Gaza -- in some kind of arrangement agreed to by the Israelis. As many observers have noted, the Middle East has seen a series of lost opportunities. Palestinian realism is a recent phenomenon, although their desire for a national identity has strengthened over the years.

Q: *Based on your experience, was the segregation of the Palestinians into camps a good idea?*

KONTOS: The camps were a necessity because the Palestinians were refugees who had to be sustained. The Quakers were the first to feed these people; UNRWA took over from the Quakers. The UN was faced with a dilemma: what to do with people who had moved into camps outside of what is now known as the "Green Line" -- the dividing line of pre-1967 Israel. So the camps already existed when UNRWA was established; they had been erected by the Palestinians themselves when they became refugees. The camps just grew up as a consequence of the refugee emigration following the 1947 partition.

Q: *Were efforts made to bring permanent improvement to the Palestinians' lives? Did they succeed? If not, why not?*

KONTOS: Efforts were made, but they couldn't be directly attributed to UNRWA's programs. Certainly some were able, by getting jobs and becoming self-sustaining, to enlarge their one-room concrete huts and turn them into two-story houses. Some Palestinians were able to improve their standard of living by participating in a growing local economy. There was some support for small entrepreneurs -- small shops and services -- but that all came from the Palestinian community itself. UNRWA's mandate was limited to providing certain services: education, public health and food. We didn't have any money to expand our efforts, even if we wanted to do so. We barely had sufficient funds to keep the continuing programs going. Each year, as the number of students increased, we had to hire more teachers.

Q: *The Arab states that might have contributed financial resources did not see the refugees as a threat to their own stability?*

KONTOS: No, they did not see the refugees as a threat. Among the host governments, however, one did see the Palestinians as a potential threat and that was Lebanon. It was greatly concerned that this large minority of displaced persons, mostly Muslims, would change the balance of power in Lebanon and add a whole new disproportionate number of Muslims to the society. The Gulf States certainly did not perceive any threat; they in fact saw the Palestinians as people deprived of their lands and property and as fellow Arabs whose grievances had to be addressed. Kuwait imported Palestinians by the thousands for jobs in the government, in the professions and in the economy in general. The Palestinian diaspora spread them throughout the world. Because they are entrepreneurial and have an exile's motivation, they have become the best educated and organized Arab group in the world. The result has been a great desire for a national flag, a seat in the UN -- a place in the political spectrum.

Q: *You were in UNRWA when the 1973 war broke out. What problems did that create for you?*

KONTOS: I happened to be on leave when it broke out. I got word that hostilities had begun during consultations in New York on my way back to Beirut. So I had to return alone, leaving Joan in the U.S. We had some problems, but the war didn't really affect UNRWA's operational role. It was no threat to me personally. We did note however starting in late 1973, a growing militancy among the Palestinians in Lebanon. Ultimately this resulted in clashes with the Lebanese army. We lived in Baabda, a suburb of Beirut, which overlooked the city. During the fighting between the Palestinians and the Lebanese army, we could see from our balcony tracer bullets flying through the sky. There were some aerial bombardments of the camps by the Lebanese, a curfew was instituted, but despite that and the violence, I was able to reach the office, although only at certain hours. I flew the UN flag on my car which also had a UN license plate.

The only time I got into any kind of personal difficulty was when, as I approached the main route in my private car, I saw that in one of the neighborhood Palestinian camp some tires had been piled up and lit, blocking the main route; so I decided -- foolishly -- to take what I thought was a shortcut. I ended up in a dead-end in a very dangerous part of town. I started to back up when I saw two young guys with machine guns running towards me shouting at me in Arabic, presumably asking me what I was doing there. They kept their guns pointed at me. This was during a period when a number of incidents had occurred with UN personnel and foreign journalists taken hostage. They would usually be held for 48 hours and then released; it wasn't anything like the way it became ultimately. I felt sure, when the two guys approached me, that I would be in trouble for a few days. I pointed to the car's license plate and kept repeating "UNRWA, UNRWA". They finally seemed to understand and indicated to me to leave there in a hurry, which I surely did. That was the closest I came to be taken hostage. I think this was some indication of the good reputation that UNRWA enjoyed among the Palestinians.

I should add that I had a UN *Laissez Passer* -- a red UN passport -- that allowed me to travel across all sorts of borders, which other Americans couldn't do. I traveled frequently to Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza; I crossed into Israel from Southern Lebanon; I went into the West Bank from Jordan. My international status eliminated any frontier barriers; I crossed borders without any difficulties. UNRWA had a daily shuttle, driven by two Swedes, going through southern Lebanon to Jerusalem, to Tel Aviv to Gaza and to the West Bank and returning to Beirut the next day. That was a very useful way to get around. I also had an UNRWA car with an Arab-speaking driver at my disposal which helped me get around. So I traveled rather widely through the Middle East, being introduced for the first time to the problems of the region and its cast of characters. It was an extraordinary experience.

DAVID WINN
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1973)

David M. Winn was born in Texas in 1942. He graduated from Swarthmore College in 1964, received an MA from the University of Texas in 1966 and an MPA

from Syracuse University in 1969. He served in the Peace Corps and then joined the Foreign Service in 1969. He has served overseas in Vietnam, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France and Senegal. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

WINN: What I am saying, summer of '73. I went to Beirut in the summer of '73.

Q: What was the situation in Beirut itself at that time?

WINN: Again, that was the heyday of the great the prewar days of Beirut, the Paris of the Middle East, but clear underpinnings of troubles with the Palestinians were restive. Black September came along the next year. I didn't follow Lebanese politics that much, but I can remember there were the beginnings of the camp outlying Beirut, by the Lebanese air force and there was a famous Israeli raid that flattened Middle East Airlines, the entire fleet out there. So, we would rock along with our Arabic, drive anywhere in the country without restrictions, including down to the Israeli border, and the problems with the Palestinians were a backdrop, but certainly nothing that even remotely affected our security. It just made it a little more exciting. Again, it was almost a replay of the Peace Corps. We had so much fun in Beirut that year. The classes were onerous and the Arabic was difficult, but we had a lot of free time. And all that we were doing was learning Arabic. Beirut was a delight and we had a wonderful time for a year.

Q: Did the embassy call on you at all?

WINN: The embassy, once, one time in that year I was duty officer for a week and I remember being terrified. "Please God, don't let... I don't know one part of the Embassy." All of the classes took place in the Embassy, but we never physically toured the Embassy, never saw any other part of the Embassy and I remember the longest week of my life was when I was the duty officer and I didn't know what to do. Every time the phone rang I was horrified. I wouldn't know who to call or what to do. Tom Carolan was the political counselor. I had a few phone numbers. You know, we had the usual frightened tourists.

Q: Can you characterize your fellow Arabic students?

WINN: They were quite a quite a bunch and to this day we're more or less in touch, you know. April Glaspie was one, later of Iraq fame, now living in South Africa. I'm in touch with her. A lot of Agency (Central Intelligence Agency) people. We've all stayed in touch, formed a bond in Beirut that is there to this day. The Agency people are either in pretty high levels or retired by now. Pretty much an adventurous bunch, you know, anyone who is going to take Arabic, there's a sense of adventure, an esprit de corps.

Q: Did you gather, either from the people there or your teachers or something, a specific attitude towards Israel?

WINN: I think the traditional resentment. I must say, you know, we Arabists, we were going to defend "the people." These people, the Arabs, we were going to sort of take their side; I recall admiring April Glaspie. She eventually became the director of UNRWA (UN Relief and Works

Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) but in Beirut she was the passionate defender of the Palestinians with a sense of injustice. She also had a keen knowledge of Lebanese politics - certainly one of the great Arabists of the Foreign Service: absolutely one of the best. That was sort of taken for granted. Remember right in the middle of that came the '73 Arab-Israeli war? I'll never forget when that started. Again, curiously little effect in Lebanon. Oddly enough we just kept going along.

Q: They weren't calling on you all to man the battlements of duty officer?

WINN: Not really, astonishingly. No, I remember being surprised at how normal life continued, but again, with little contact with the embassy. We would go up to that fourth floor and go home again, but we were never included in embassy life. I don't remember; I never met any of those people – political counselor, DCM – it was another world. We did our thing separate from the Embassy.

Q: Did you get absorbed at all into Lebanese society or the American University or anything like that?

WINN: Well, Lebanese society not to the extent I did later when I returned as political counselor to Beirut. No, we were just kind of freaky little kids in jeans. We were just so weird and out of it with our Arabic books and what have you. I'm not sure we wanted to be. After a day of Arabic, we wanted to literally do our own thing, Occasionally we would be invited over to the homes of the Lebanese instructors. But, the Lebanese, I don't know that we knew a lot of Lebanese per se. April did. She always did, but we were interested in tour partying, and touring the country. Jim Hughes, a colleague, and I discovered every inch of that country. Every Roman temple, up and down, all over Lebanon. It was only a year, but it went overnight. It went very fast.

Q: How about your, did you have your trip?

WINN: The trip, the famous trip? I sure did. Jim Hughes and I went down to Yemen and Saudi Arabia and you can imagine, Yemen in 1971. We latched onto the ambassador Bill Crawford and traveled all over Yemen with him. You can imagine rural Yemen in the early '70's. I got some wild pictures and then went up to Saudi Arabia when Riyadh was little more than a village. The Embassy indeed was in Jeddah. I went to Jeddah and Riyadh and then back to Beirut, yes we did the trip. It was wonderful.

Q: When you got out, when you graduated, how did you find your Arabic?

WINN: Well, it was pretty rusty because so much time in the course is spent in reading. So much work is involved in solitary pouring over texts and so little time opportunity for speaking. That said, I did have a solid base and once I got to Amman, my next post – again still a bachelor – I had nothing to do in the evening but immerse myself in Arabic with young men of my age, so I was really the embassy's "outside guy." I had such a solid base, I quickly became quite proficient, but I would not have been had I been married. Being a bachelor, I just forced myself to spend every night and every weekend, however boring, with these young Jordanian men who spoke no English. I was pretty rusty. I could barely order a cup to be fair, but I had an incredibly solid base to

develop, thanks to FSI.

EDMUND JAMES HULL
Arabic Language Training
Beirut (1974)

Ambassador Hull was born in Iowa and raised in Illinois. He was educated at Princeton and Oxford Universities. After service in the Peace Corps, Mr. Hull joined the Foreign Service in 1974 and had postings in Amman, Beirut, Jerusalem, Tunis and Cairo as well as serving as Ambassador to Yemen from 2001 to 2004. In Washington, the Ambassador served on the National Security Council and as Advisor to the Secretary of State on Counterterrorism. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: You'd been off in the Maghreb, quite removed really from the cockpit of the Middle East. Were you reading your way in or were you getting yourself informed about what was going on?

HULL: Yes. I was getting smarter and actually the Arabic training was a part of that process. My initial class in Arlington had two other students in it. Our teacher was an Egyptian woman. When I opened my mouth and spoke my Tunisian Arabic she was appalled. It was the most offensive Arabic she had ever heard in her life. One of my classmates had grown up in Cairo and spoke the Egyptian dialect. For the first time in my life, I confronted real prejudice. I had to gradually shed my Tunisian accent and adopt a more Egyptian variant. After that experience, we went over to Lebanon to the language school at the embassy in Beirut and there most of the teachers were Palestinians. And so along with the language you imbibed history and politics from the teachers. I got smarter fast.

Q: Were you in contact with the Middle Eastern NEA desks?

HULL: Not really, not until we got to the embassy in Beirut.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

HULL: Godley. Mac Godley. Godley was a very colorful person. He had been, I believe, in Laos and had been very much involved in the counter-insurgency operation.

Q: He was called the bombing officer or something.

HULL: Yes. And I still remember my introduction. When we got to Beirut, it was just on the eve of the civil war and when we walked around West Beirut, young men with Kalashnikovs were positioned on the street corners. It was an armed camp even around the embassy, which was a rather sobering sight. The embassy itself had an APC parked in front of it because it had been attacked. We were given our introduction by Ambassador Godley who proceeded to explain why Lebanon, despite its many troubles, would never sink into civil strife because there were

cross-cutting connections among the economic elites that would prevent that. Of course, it was an ill-fated prediction, because even though we were only there six months, we were there to see that civil strife ignited. But I was young, I was eligible, and I was invited by the ambassador to a luncheon because there was a young single guest, a female, who needed companionship. I spoke a little bit of French and a little bit of Arabic and was a good choice for that. I remember going to the luncheon, which was hosted by a prominent Lebanese Christian family. After the luncheon the young lady and I were taken out by the young Lebanese to do two things: one, to take target practice with an AK-47 on a mountainside and two, they brought out a stallion and mated him with a mare. This was the recreation, the entertainment for the afternoon luncheon.

The reason I mention this is because the prominent Christian family was the only real contact I had with a political family in Lebanon. After I had been in Beirut for a while, I was asked about that connection. The way that happened was I had bought a car, a red Fiat 128, and I think it was the first or second weekend that I owned the car and was driving around Beirut. I was going down from my apartment in the Manara (lighthouse) District to a movie theater and noticed first that the theater was closed and then the streets were empty. I concluded something was amiss, so I started heading back to my apartment, but missed the turn on Hamrah Street, which was the main street of West Beirut. I went up one street further and found myself confronting a Palestinian roadblock. My car had diplomatic plates. I was stopped, the car was searched. Unfortunately, the weekend before we had gone to Deir al Qamar (the Monastery of the Moon) one of the tourist attractions in Lebanon, and one of my colleagues had left a camera under the back seat of the car. So when the car was searched at the roadblock, the camera was discovered, and it was associated with the diplomatic license plate. I was immediately taken by the armed militants into the Palestinian camp, which I believe was Tel Az Za'atar (Hill of Thyme). I glimpsed a poster on a wall which showed an arrow bent through Jordan and into Palestine so I believe my captors were from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine whose ideology called for liberating Palestine via the overthrow of Jordan's Hashemite monarchy. I was interrogated, hooded, for quite awhile as they tried to figure out whether or not I was spying. It was a very vivid experience, the interrogation. I remember being guarded, I could just barely see through the hood, and I can remember being guarded by someone who looked like he was about twelve years old with a finger on the trigger of the Kalashnikov pointed right at me. There was rocketing going on that you could hear from the detention area. I remember in the middle of the night being woken up, taken in my car, my head forced down in the back seat. The individual who was guarding me in the back's heart was beating violently. I could only think the one reason why that would be happening, and that was he was ordered to do away with me and was a little bit nervous about doing the job. I really thought that was the end. But in fact, what happened was they took me to a second camp, repeated all the interrogation, and I was lucky because I knew nothing about embassy operations other than the language school. I had no secrets to hide. The only thing I had to hide was this weekend association with this prominent Christian family. My technique in answering the questions was to tell the absolute truth about everything but one fact and to lie about that fact consistently. By strictly limiting the amount of lying that I was doing, it made it easier to keep track because, of course, in interrogation that's the technique to try to catch you contradicting yourself. After many, many, many hours and a few relatively minor knocks on the head, one of my interrogators came in, un-hooded me, displayed my personal effects including the camera. I had been telling them take the film and develop it because then they would see the only thing that's on the film is a tourist site, nothing in the security way. And they returned all the personal effects, including the camera. I had

assumed that they had checked out the film in some way. They asked me whether I had been mistreated. I said no. And then they told me they were going to release me and they actually took me out to a main street, Sharia' al Mazra' (the Street of the Farm) and gave me precise instructions to get to the Corniche that ran along Beirut's coastline and to the American Embassy. They didn't want me to turn off into another camp and end up in more trouble. I followed the instructions very, very carefully, drove back to the embassy and then reported my captivity. This was before, just before, all the American hostages were taken and held in Beirut for years and years and years. I think my timing on being a hostage was fortunate indeed.

Q: What was the embassy's reaction?

HULL: Surprise. They hadn't missed me. Of course, I was debriefed extensively. I think it was upon debriefing that I concluded that I had been held by the PLFP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) given the poster I had seen on the wall. That was my most vivid experience in Beirut.

Q: What happened to the language class? All of a sudden you're moving into this situation. Did they keep it going?

HULL: Well, it was touch and go for weeks and months. Finally, they decided they had to move the school. And the proposal was to move it to Tunisia. I had pretty much finished the course by then, but I still had about six months before I had to report for duty in Jerusalem in January, 1975 so I proposed to them that they let me take off on my own to the University of Jordan and enroll myself at the University of Jordan. They agreed. I packed up all my belongings into my red Fiat and took out when there was a pause in the fighting, over the mountains and into Damascus and from there, of course, it was easy getting down to Amman, Jordan. I'm not sure that the regional security officer these days would allow a junior officer to do something like that, but back then it was possible.

Q: By the time you left there, was the embassy still talking like it's not going to turn into civil war? Were they downplaying what was happening or were they taking it pretty seriously?

HULL: No, that all changed after the "Ain Rumanah" incident.

Q: What was that?

HULL: Ain Rumanah (the spring of Rumanah) was a neighborhood of Beirut. There was a busload of Palestinians going through it. Christian militias massacred them. To my mind anyway, that marked the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War. It was downhill pretty quickly thereafter. As I said, you went one block above Hamrah, the main street in Beirut, and you ran into Palestinian guerrillas controlling the whole show. No, I think by that time the embassy knew it was serious.

Q: You had Palestinian teachers mainly. In the first place this whole thing was basically a spillover from Black September of 1970, wasn't it? The Palestinian militants had been kicked out of Jordan and ended up in Beirut, weren't they? Was that the genesis?

HULL: That was a significant factor. The armed Palestinian presence and moreover the Palestinian operations from southern Lebanon into Israel and the Israeli retaliations for those operations which were pushing more and more poor Shia from the south of Lebanon up into the capital and creating the southern suburbs which became the bases of Hezbollah. But that was only one factor. The Lebanese political system had been frozen for decades, along confessional lines. There were families, the Jumblatts, the Gemayels, etc. which had basically turned Lebanon into private fiefdoms and controlled a lot of the government wealth that was channeled into private pockets. There was a big gap and a growing gap between the way the well-to-do lived in Lebanon on a European level of prosperity and the poor, particularly the poor Shia, who had been forced into the southern suburbs of Beirut. And that economic tension was just extraordinary. The mismatch between how politics were run in Lebanon and the demographic facts caused very great tensions. So when it came, it was more sectarian – Christians, Muslim, and the Palestinians initially tried to stay out of it, but then got sucked into it eventually. So it was a very complicated picture, but definitely not as rosy as Ambassador Godley had painted it.

GEORGE LAMBRAKIS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Beirut (1975-1976)

George Lambrakis was born in Illinois in 1931. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1952, he went on to earn both his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1953 and his law degree from Tufts University in 1969. His career has included positions in Saigon, Pakse, Conakry, Munich, Tel Aviv, and Teheran. Mr. Lambrakis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2002.

LAMBRAKIS: I got assigned to Beirut in 1975.

Q: What was the situation there?

LAMBRAKIS: The situation was that there had been a serious incident between the primarily Christian and the primarily Muslim sides, although it was a much more complicated arrangement in that the so-called Muslim side was really also radical and not openly Muslim because a Druze was leading it. The so-called Christian side was more right wing as well as primarily Christian. But there was no war going on in the summer of '75. There had been a bloody incident. I was asked to go there as deputy chief of mission to Mac Godley. As usual in the Foreign Service, if you spoke some kind of French there was a series of posts. French Indo China often led to Beirut. Ambassador Donald Heath had done the same thing. Mac was there then. I went in as his DCM. I was more junior in grade than two of the officers there, both economic and administrative counselors, although I got promoted the next promotion period the next year. Then all hell broke loose in September when the war really got going right in Beirut. My family, my wife and kids, came with me in July and got evacuated in September. They hardly unpacked. I stayed there for exactly a year, from July to July, '76.

Q: The war, what was the war?

LAMBRAKIS: This was a complicated war following on previous problems between the haves and have nots to a large degree. The haves being the Lebanese Christians for the most part, led by the Maronites, although some of the Christians, non-Maronites, Greek Orthodox, were primarily neutral or even on the side of the have nots. It was a war that had its beginnings perhaps as far back as independence. I did my Ph.D. dissertation on the American relationship with Lebanon. I could go into a lot of detail, but I don't think we have an awful lot of time for that. Let's say that the original agreements between Muslims and Christians setting up the state of Lebanon involved an unwritten agreement which allowed the Christians more power than the Muslims, but also required that the Christians stop asking for aid from the French or British or anybody else, in return for which the Muslims would not try to join the neighboring Muslim countries such as Syria which has always claimed Lebanon. Up until the end of World War I, the area was basically known as Syria. In fact I think I have a postcard of the American Consulate, Beirut, Syria. Now in 1958 there was a brief outbreak of fighting, much more specifically Muslim versus Christian. It had a lot to do with Arab socialism led by Nasser and the Syrians at the time. Camille Chamoun, who was president back then, had called in the Americans. The American marines had landed in '58 only to find that the war had ended. And by the way, a little known incident in that is the American ambassador at the time - Rob McClintock, another fellow who had served in Indo-China - had a very important part in stopping the war because the Lebanese army was getting ready to oppose the landing when he intervened with Chehab, the commander-in-chief of the army who then became the next president.

This leads us up to by '75 you had a much bigger Palestinian presence there because the Palestinians had been kicked out of Jordan in 1970, Black September. Actually they had been in Lebanon before that. In 1969 there was a pact in Lebanon (the “Cairo agreement”) which gave them privileges, in effect running the southern part of the country even before 1970. This began to stick in the craw particularly of the haves, namely the Christian dominant group, the Maronites, who by agreement always controlled the presidency and always controlled the army. This continued, and in Spring 1975 there was a bad incident between the Palestinians and the Christians which blew up for awhile. Camille Chamoun was also involved. His interests were involved in southern Lebanon where people objected to some of his economic moves.

The president at the time, Frangie, was a warlord from the north who had become president by one vote in a hung parliament. He was certainly a fairly unsophisticated fellow compared to his predecessors, but he nevertheless had a special relationship which allowed him to get along with the Syrians while still opposing tooth and nail the left wing led by Jumblatt, the leader of the Druze, who under the unwritten agreement had no place to go, because the Maronites had jobs, the Sunnis had the prime ministership, the Shias had the chairmanship of the parliament, the unicameral parliament. No place for the Druze even though the Druze had originally (in Ottoman times) been in charge of Lebanon even before the Maronites. This undoubtedly bothered Jumblatt who had taken a fairly ambiguous position in 1958, and who was leading the have-nots and the Muslims in 1975-76.

The war as it broke out in Beirut in September was primarily between the Phalangists under a right wing semi-fascist Maronite warlord, Pierre Gemayel and his sons, the Jumblattist forces, a mixed

group of radicals assisted by Palestinians. The war went back and forth for quite awhile. We, the American embassy, evacuated non-essential personnel early on at the end of '75. Mac Godley happened to be away on leave when the war actually started, so I had my first bloodying there with Camille Chamoun telling me that the army was going to move in, the war would start, and the U.S. should intervene. We didn't do anything. I held off. Mac came back, I went home for Christmas, and was asked to come back urgently because he had throat cancer and had to be evacuated to the United States for an operation. Then I ended up being Chargé between three more ambassadors there, one of whom was kidnapped and assassinated, Frank Meloy.

Q: How did that come about?

LAMBRAKIS: Well let me give you a little bit of the flavor. Beirut was a place in which no one was in charge. You ran a risk of being kidnapped and killed if you walked the street, quite apart from the shooting that happened periodically across the streets. My wife was almost kidnapped before the war broke out by people who would kidnap. They were known to be raping and killing European women, among other things. It was a completely lawless kind of place. I lived three blocks form the embassy. I remember one morning walking out and having a ten year old kid with a big automatic pointed at me. I smiled, and he smiled, and that was it, but he could easily have pulled the trigger playing games. After awhile, we did not go out in the streets too much, except incognito, on a weekend, taking a little walk. Otherwise it was very dangerous in a suit and tie. In January or February, I believe it was, that year, or maybe earlier, two of our people were kidnapped. They were USIA. They ran a printing shop. Beirut had been the center of our Middle Eastern regional operations. It had a lot of Americans.

Q: Printing press or something like that.

LAMBRAKIS: Well it was the USIA printing press. The USIA has regional presses in each part of the world, and the regional one for the Middle East was there. These guys were printers. They were in a different part of town. They were kidnapped by this little band who accused them of being CIA. They were locked up, somewhat beaten up, not too much. We made a big effort, and we got them out after two months. I believe, and this has never been proven, that even though we said we would not pay to get them out, I believe that Frangie or someone on his behalf, made a promise to the kidnappers that had to do with giving them arms or something, which he then did not carry out. That is one theory. Why do I say all this? Because later on the Frank Meloy issue comes up.

By the time Frank was assigned to Beirut, we had already had Dean Brown come and so this is really a key time. The Palestinians were helping the left wing so well that they were winning, and they were winning to the point that the Christians were in panic. I recall the cadence. I was Chargé at the time. We used to write two cables to Washington every day. One was the normal situation one on what was happening cable, from which the CIA got a lot of information through their contacts. The other was the Chief of Mission's own judgment cable. I remember the daily cables that I was writing at the time. I remember the panic of the Maronites who were asking for American assistance and who were claiming that they could hear Russian voices on the other side, which I thought was ridiculous. Actually I never reported that until much later to Washington. But at that key moment Jumblatt was invited to Syria where the Syrian president, Assad, gave him a tongue lashing for two or three hours. Jumblatt was unhappy because the Syrians had started to

help the Christians to keep them from losing. Jumblatt was saying whose side are you on? Assad said, "I am going to help the Christians because if I don't I will lose all my credibility with them." Jumblatt wrote that in his memoirs. It is interesting to read his memoirs as well as Chamille Chamoun's memoirs afterwards. Assad took that position, which Americans welcomed, certainly did not object to it. The Israelis and others accused the United States of having encouraged Assad to invade Lebanon, but it seems pretty clear to me that Assad did it for his own interests because Syria has always wanted the dominant role in Lebanon. He thought that this was his way of getting it. So all of this had taken place.

At that moment someone named Ghassan Tveini, who was a very prominent journalist, and was also then minister of information, came to see me and said, "We really should have Americans try to stop this. How about acting as a mediator." I reported this to Washington. Washington said the Secretary of State (Kissinger) is very busy. You are doing fine, just keep doing what you are doing. I went and saw the British ambassador and the French ambassador and said, "What about the three of us doing this?" They didn't want to have any part in it. So I went and saw Jumblatt when he returned from Damascus and said to him, "What about trying to settle this thing now. What can we do to help?" Jumblatt played me off a little bit and said, "Why don't we meet tomorrow?" I went back to the embassy and wrote a quick cable to Washington saying what had happened. Got a quick cable back saying don't do anything until you hear again. We have our position. This was a stated position which we had repeated many times and which people were laughing at because it was repeating the same platitudes we had always repeated. As a result of that, Kissinger, when he did focus on it, said, "I don't know who Lambrakis is. He is only a Chargé." And as Dean Brown told me the story afterwards, Brown was at the airport to meet King Hussein who was visiting Washington at the moment, and Kissinger said, "come see me, I have a special job for you." Dean Brown, who was retired, was then sent out to be the mediator.

In my estimation, and this is not just talking sour grapes, I thought that the high level way in which this was done, very publicized, was the wrong way simply because both sides then assumed the United States had a very important interest in settling this thing, and therefore they would ask the maximum to see if the Americans can get it for them. So Dean came, and I went back and forth with him to the Christian side, to the Jumblatt side, negotiating this, negotiating that. It failed. Dean wrote about it afterwards. It was then decided that they needed a proper ambassador there who would pick his own DCM.

Frank Meloy was encouraged to pick his own DCM rather than keep me. He picked Dayton Mak who had been DCM there before and was also retired. Frank came to Lebanon, and Dayton Mak was coming, and I was about to leave, when a cable from Washington said, Frank, you have been here awhile. Maybe it is time to present your credentials to the new president. After Frangie, the new president was the former minister of economy, but he was now living in east Beirut, which was a Christian area. You had to cross a green line between the Muslim patrolled and the Christian patrolled areas. It was kept very quiet. I only learned at the last minute that Meloy was going that morning. He took along with him the third ranking man at the embassy, Bob Waring, the economic counselor, who knew the new president very well. I was leaving anyway, so I was left back at the embassy. The two of them, with the ambassador's driver and a follow car, went. The follow car was told as they were approaching the green line by the ambassador's driver, "Okay, you can leave us now." Nothing more was heard. Then two hours later, we got a call from the president's office

saying, "Where is the ambassador?" At which point I got involved, sent a flash message back to Washington saying, "We have lost the ambassador and Waring." We started asking around, didn't learn anything.

Then that same afternoon two Red Cross men came and asked to see me. They came up to my office and we were sitting next to each other like that. One of them said, "Are you having any problems?" I said, "Yes, I am having problems. I've lost my ambassador." He turned around to me like that and said, "Well, my dear sir," he was a Swiss. "Why don't you come with me to identify the bodies." That's how we learned that they had been shot and dumped in front of an area that was going to be the new American embassy. It was further into the Muslim area, one we never finished. I called in the embassy security officer and all that. We identified the bodies and we took care of it after that.

At that point, of course, Washington decided that this was a critical moment and we should evacuate all Americans. Then it was a question of how that would be done. I stayed on as Chargé under the circumstances. We had a major evacuation in which Kissinger was twisting everybody's arm to "let my people go," as it were. There were a lot of intermediaries. The French and the Egyptians were actually the most helpful intermediaries. We came very close to another invasion of Lebanon on that occasion. It was early afternoon when the British chargé came in to see me. (The ambassador had gone.) He said, "What are you people doing?" I said, "What do you mean what are we doing?" He said, "What are you doing? We know what you are doing." It was through him that I understood that Washington was contemplating a second marine landing in Lebanon (after 1958). At that point I sent a message to Roy Atherton who was then Assistant Secretary of NEA asking what is happening? Then we started talking on a secure telephone. He said, "Yes we are contemplating this. How do you feel about it?" I said, "Well I don't think it is a good idea, and the British don't think it is a good idea." He said, "Well hurry up and send me a message because the president is about to make a decision." So I got our very senior colonel who was our military attaché in there and the top embassy people, and we were talking about this. Ten minutes later a telephone call came through. "What's happened to that telegram? The President is about to make a decision." So we got off a flash telegram saying we think this would be very bad, unnecessary, and the British think so too. Washington wasn't aware that the British even knew. That apparently swung the balance.

Then we had a couple of days of discussion on how to make a peaceful evacuation. The airport was closed. Overland seemed dicey. It was finally decided that the U.S. Navy, which was itchy to get into the action, since I had quietly asked them several months before to stand by, was going to take them out by amphibious landing craft. Who would protect them? The only people who could, the Palestinians. But we couldn't talk to the Palestinians because Kissinger had made a promise to the Israelis not to talk to the Palestinians. I had been using an intermediary to get messages back and forth, who was a very prominent former presidential candidate, Raymond Edde, a Greek Orthodox. But we got the message delivered through the Egyptians primarily. On the day we had a peaceful evacuation of about a hundred and twenty American, British, and French citizens. A lot of them simply because the airport was closed used it to go abroad and come back again. In other words it was not felt as a crisis locally. But it was a crisis in the U.S. government. Of course, President Ford was very happy it went so well. The military were very happy, and all that kind of thing.

Q: Well what was our feeling about why Ambassador Meloy and his economic counselor were killed?

LAMBRAKIS: That is an unsolved issue officially. I will tell you what I think. I knew the ambassador's chauffeur. We were on very good terms. The ambassador's chauffeur needed money. He was always asking me when he was going to get some more money, because he had won a U.S. government award of $500, and could he get a raise, things like that. I also know he was once captured by the radicals who took away his car and things and then gave them all back to him. Putting two and two together, he is the one who told the follow car to go away on the day he drove Meloy and Waring, told them prematurely to go away. He, I am fairly certain, was told that these people would be kidnapped. He would be kidnapped. They would be kidnapped. He was not told anything about their being killed. He probably thought they would be kidnapped like our two USIS guys and eventually released. I have a feeling that they had been holding this over him from the day they took him in and released him; they sort of said your family is going to suffer if you play tricks with us. I have that feeling . Mind you, I presided over a memorial service to him in Beirut because at the time, what apparently happened is they all three got killed immediately. Now who did it, a line seems to go back to the same crowd that did the USIS kidnappings, a small group of possibly Lebanese working under Palestinian control, possibly Palestinians. We are not quite sure, radicals. There was never any political reason for it. There were never any political demands made. It was a mystery. It still is a mystery. The only reason I can think is they felt they were double crossed over the American USIS people, and they were going to show everybody that you can't double cross them. That is the only thing I can think of.

Q: Then you left there. Did you go out, too?

LAMBRAKIS: I went out in July, a little later because Talcott Seelye then came out as special emissary after Meloy's kidnapping. He asked me to stay on as DCM even though they had sent out the head of NEA administration to act as administrative DCM during those turbulent times. But I had had enough. They talked about an assignment at the UNP, which would have been under Sam Lewis who was then in charge of 10. He was an old classmate of mine from SAIS, a very good friend. But I didn't want to come back to Washington. I was given the choice between Canada and Iran as political counselor. Roy Atherton told me I should go to Iran, and I went along. Iran was very quiet at the time.

EDWARD G. ABINGTON
Staff Aide to Assistant Secretary, NEA
Washington, DC (1975-1977)

Mr. Abington was born in Texas into a US military family and was raised in military posts in the US and abroad. An Arabic language officer and specialist in Near East Affairs, he describes his experience dealing with Israel-Arab hostilities and general regional problems while serving as Political Officer at Embassies Tel

Aviv and Damascus. In his postings at the State Department in Washington, he also dealt with Near East matters. Mr. Abington was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: So what happened?

ABINGTON: It was the last week of the consular course. The person running the course called me up and said that in the Near East Bureau the country directorate for Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, there was a new junior officer position that had just been created. They had a big workload. Would I be interested in going over and interviewing for the job, meeting with the country director, Talcott Seelye? I said, "Sure." They said, "We normally don't assign people to the Department for their first tour. We like to send people overseas for their first tour. But if the country director likes you and offers you the job and you want to do it, we would assign you and break your assignment to Beirut." So, I went and interviewed with Talcott Seelye. I think he liked what I said. He offered me the job.

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Q: I imagine it was. Were you looking at Syria at the time?

ABINGTON: To a degree, but the Jordan crisis kind of overwhelmed people. On Labor Day I had been out and I got home and there was a phone call from Talcott Seelye. He said there had been these multiple hijackings. He asked if I would come in and pull the graveyard shift in the Operations Center. They were setting up a task force. At that point, the State Department and the Operations Center had not had experience in setting up a task force and in running a situation like this. Here you had multiple aircraft high-jacked, increasing turmoil in the streets of Amman, a new ambassador, Dean Brown. I remember a photograph of Dean presenting his credentials to the King. He was taken to the palace in an APC. The hijackings provided the catalyst for the confrontation between the Jordanians and the PLO. I spent 3 or 4 months working 7 days a week 12 hours a day in the Operations Center first with the high-jacking, then with the civil war and the threat of Syrian invasion of Lebanon and then the Israelis with U.S. urging, Kissinger working with Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin to really put the pressure on the Syrians to keep them out of Jordan. This was a geopolitical struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. I was this junior officer in a catbird seat watching all of this.

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Q: You arrived there when?

ABINGTON: Late August/early September of 1972.

Q: What was the political situation in Israel at the time?

ABINGTON: It was a Labor government led by Golda Meir. Shimon Peres was in the cabinet, a young cabinet minister. Yitzhak Rabin was the Israeli ambassador in Washington. I arrived in Tel Aviv right about the time of the Munich massacre, the seizure by PLO elements of Israeli Olympic

athletes at the Munich Olympics and a rescue attempt that went disastrously wrong and led to the death of 12 or so Israeli athletes. Any such terrorist incident really grips Israel. In a way, Israel has been through such trauma because of terrorist incidents that it seemed to me like the nation was many times verging on the edge of hysterical breakdown. It just shows the impact that terrorist incidents have within Israel. I recall taking a tour of the Israel-Lebanon border and listening to the radio of the events in Munich and the death of the Israeli athletes there. It was a very traumatic event for Israelis, as one would expect. To have young athletes going to an event such as the Olympics and being caught up in this kind of violence and then to die a very violent death was something that really affected the Israeli psyche tremendously. I think one thing that gets me about Israeli policy – and as I look at this today the fighting between Israelis and Palestinians around Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank – is that the Israelis always adopt a policy of retaliation, of trying to make the Arabs pay a terrible price in loss of life and destruction of property. It seems to me that the Israelis have been doing this for 50 years and it has never worked but they can't seem to come up with a better policy whenever there are these kinds of difficulties. What happened after the Munich killings was that the Israelis went into Beirut and assassinated Palestinian leaders. I can't remember the precise timing but they may have destroyed Lebanese aircraft on the ground. This kind of retaliation that the Israelis have traditionally carried out ever since the founding of the state only fuels the cycle of violence between the Israelis and the Arabs.

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Q: That was Black September.

ABINGTON: Yes. They had relocated in Lebanon, which was becoming increasingly unstable in the mid-'70s. In late '75/'76, Lebanon became a real hotspot. I think that there was a perception in the embassy that Egypt was playing a different role and the U.S. leadership - Kissinger, Nixon, and then Ford – were looking at Egypt in a much different light.

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Q: How were you used?

ABINGTON: Roy really gave a lot of authority to the staff aides and it was an enormously demanding job. I did it for two years, an incredibly long period of time. We would either come in at 6:30 or 7:00 AM and stay until 4:00 or 5:00 PM or we'd come in around 9:00 AM and stay until 9:00 or 10:00 PM and work every other weekend. There were so many things going on during that period. Not only were there the Israeli-Arab negotiations on the peace process that Kissinger was conducting, but there were things like the crisis in Lebanon, the assassination of Frank Meloy, the ambassador there. Not too long after I arrived in the summer of 1975, the fighting between Lebanese and Palestinians became more and more intense. Towards the end of the summer/early fall, there was the evacuation of the FSI language school in Beirut and relocation of the school to Tunis. There was the drawdown of personnel at the embassy in Lebanon. I acted as Roy's factotum in terms of keeping track of what was going on, deciding what he needed to be alerted on and what he needed to work on. I worked with Pete Day and then later Hal Saunders very closely on these issues. There was just an enormous amount of paper that was prepared particularly for the first year of the Middle East negotiations. I was responsible for compiling the written history of these

negotiations. Every time Kissinger would go anywhere, to China or to Europe, he would always take someone with him – Roy Atherton or Sisco or Hal Saunders – to staff him on the Middle East. It always takes someone very senior to staff him on the Middle East. We used to have these incredible number of suitcases which contained all the documentation, all of the previously negotiated agreements, not only the text of the agreements but all the side documents, the side letters of understanding, memoranda of agreement and so forth. Not only that, I would compile three- ring binders of all the conversations that Kissinger had and our ambassadors in the region had and cables that acted as backup. I can remember when Roy or Sisco would travel, they might have 20-25 of these bags of documents. It was just the way Kissinger did business. He wanted the documentation there that he could refer to. The people traveling with him wanted the documentation. It was an incredible job to try to keep up with all of this material plus all of the other things that the NE Bureau was dealing with. In terms of managing the paper flow, of building this library of documents on the peace process, it was a very intensive job with lots and lots of long hours. I probably saw more of Roy Atherton during that two- year period than any other person in my life.

Q: I would think one of the problems with this documentation is that Henry Kissinger had the reputation of going in on a one-on-one conversation, excluding other people. One was always concerned about promises made and all that. Was this true?

ABINGTON: Kissinger generally debriefed people after he had these meetings. Being a political scientist/historian, he was definitely looking to the future when he was no longer Secretary of State and would be writing about that period, a very dynamic period in American foreign policy. He would generally debrief people, such as Peter Rodman or other people would make notes of his meetings and then write them up. It was the same with telephone calls. At that point, whenever Henry Kissinger had a telephone conversation with a foreign official, generally there would be three or four people listening in on the line. The person on the other end was never told that anyone was listening in.

Q: This was common practice throughout the State Department, wasn't it?

ABINGTON: Yes, very much so. The practice changed later on when privacy concerns became more to the front. But during these phone conversations, Kissinger would insist on a verbatim memorandum of conversation. You usually had a secretary listening to the conversation, recording it in shorthand, and then the memorandum of conversation would be typed up and given very limited distribution. Kissinger wanted them immediately. That became the top priority of whoever was listening in.

Q: For the record, many of these things staff assistants at the State Department at the upper levels would be taking notes of things to do so that the principal person talking…

ABINGTON: In all the years I spent at the State Department, I felt that the State Department performed at the highest peak when Kissinger was Secretary of State. He demanded a lot from the State Department staff. He didn't tolerate sloppy work and he would be brutal if you sent a memorandum to him that was not well thought out and succinct – he would come back with very acerbic comments. I was a task master for the NEA bureau. I would read memorandum and would

rather rudely edit them myself and send them back to the drafters, which most staff aides didn't have that kind of authority, but Atherton wanted me to do it because he felt that Kissinger looked very carefully at things coming out of the NEA bureau and he wanted good work to go upstairs.

The way the Department worked during that period also was that Kissinger and Sisco wanted to bypass the system and the bureaucracy altogether. The number of memoranda going to Kissinger that were "out of the system" was very high. What that meant was that Kissinger, when he wanted something, he wanted it five minutes ago. Or he considered it to be very sensitive and he felt that he didn't want the line officers and the staff secretariat going over the memos or he didn't want to take the time to have them staffed. With the Near East Bureau, it was a very unique relationship with Kissinger's office and with US for Political Affairs Joe Sisco. Many of the memos that we did on the peace process would go directly to Sisco, who would walk them into Kissinger, or would go directly to Kissinger and they wouldn't even be put in the system. Eventually copies of the memoranda made their way into the archives of the State Department, but there was an awful lot of material that did not go through the formal system through the staff secretariat on the problems facing the Middle East Bureau, it looks like it was divided up into the peace process, which is essentially Egypt and Israel, and then the Lebanese thing with the Palestinians. The Palestinians were part of the Lebanese problem as opposed to the Israeli problem at that time. Am I wrong?

During the Kissinger negotiations, we tried to get at the Palestinian problem through negotiation with Jordan. We started talking about things like functional autonomy for the Palestinians. In other words, they would run civic affairs but the Israelis would still be occupying the area but with less of a direct control over the daily life of Palestinians. There were some attempts to try to get those negotiations off the ground between Jordan and Israel but the issues were complex, very difficult, and quickly fell to the wayside as Kissinger really concentrated on things like the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement or the Egyptian-Israeli negotiation or when the crisis in Lebanon became increasingly serious in '75/'76. We tried to deal with the Lebanon crisis in a way to keep Syria and Israel from being sucked into a war over Lebanon. The Palestinian issue was really secondary and to the extent that it was addressed, particularly in late '75/'76, it was a function of the increasingly serious fighting in Lebanon.

Q: Did the question of Israeli settlements in the West Bank come up then?

ABINGTON: Yes, it was an issue. Of course, it was a Labor government. The defense minister and later foreign minister, Yigal Allon, put forward a plan to establish Israeli settlements in areas that were considered important for Israel's security, the Jordan Valley and the West Bank ridge line that would be to the west of the Jordan Valley. He established a string of settlements and built north-south highways in that area. The Arabs protested this and would take it to the UN. At the time, the United States took a pretty firm line in the Security Council against Israeli settlements and generally voted for resolutions that condemned the settlements and called on Israel to cease seizing land and building settlements and transferring population into Palestinian areas. That included in East Jerusalem as well. But while the settlement issue was a subject of dialogue with Israel it never became the central issue.

One has to keep in mind that at the time we were talking not only about settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, but also there was a very active building of settlements up in the

Golan Heights. The Israelis basically razed the Syrian villages that were up there, bulldozed the villages, bulldozed the walls marking off Syrian fields and so forth, and created an uninterrupted area up in the Golan Heights that was open to Israeli settlements. But more importantly from the point of view of Kissinger at the time were Israeli settlement activity in the Sinai. Kissinger even before Camp David understood that an Egyptian-Israeli peace had to entail full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and that meant that Israel would have to give up all of the settlements that it had been establishing since 1967 in the Sinai. So, the settlement issue was an important issue and it had a lot of different ramifications, but probably the focus in '75/'76 was thinking about how settlements affected the ongoing Israeli-Egyptian negotiating process, and it was less of a focus on the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza, although that was important within an inter-Arab context.

Q: As you were watching this, did you get any feel about the difference in negotiating style or outlook between the Egyptians and the Israelis and then also with the Syrians?

ABINGTON: Negotiations with the Syrians in terms of Israeli-Syrian negotiations pretty much petered out after the 1974 disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights. Increasingly that process in terms of trying to consider or try to work towards an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement was overtaken by the mounting crisis in Lebanon. Syria was faced with a situation of enormous complexity which threatened to suck Syria and Israel into an all-out war. U.S. efforts at the time were focused on trying to reach a series of understandings, informal understandings, of red lines between Syria and Israel so that each understood what each party could or could not do in Lebanon. Those red lines were designed to keep Israel and Syria from going to war over Lebanon. In terms of negotiating style between Israel and Egypt, President Sadat had a very clear vision of where he wanted to go and he was less interested in the actual details of negotiation than getting to the end result. The Israelis on the other hand – and I've seen this throughout – they did it with the Lebanese in 1982, – they might concede certain broad principles but then the Israelis would win back whatever concessions they've made through nickeling and diming every single detail. The Israeli negotiating style with the Arabs is such that they focus on the details so much, they take away the good feeling that comes from an agreement by making their negotiating partner feel that there is no such thing as a goodwill gesture on the part of the Israelis. They insist on nailing down all of their concerns in writing and the Israeli style is very much to look at the details, to have lawyers draft the details, and the Arabs by comparison the way they negotiate, I think that they were at a disadvantage in drafting the text of agreements. The net effect of these agreements was that the Arabs felt that the Israelis got too much and instead of becoming a win-win situation people who negotiated with the Israelis have a pretty bitter taste in their mouth at the end of the process. Whatever goodwill was there tended to be dissipated as the difficulties of implementing the agreements became apparent.

Q: In the Near Eastern Bureau, you move over to the Tigris, Euphrates, Syria, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, and then beyond, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and all. Did that get pretty short shrift in those days?

ABINGTON: Very much so. Roy Atherton spent hardly any time at all on South Asian issues or for that matter even looking at the Gulf, at Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan. That was backwater of the Near East and South Asia Bureau. At the time, you had a Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia. That person had a tremendous amount of latitude in terms of dealing with those issues and would

spend most of his time dealing with South Asia and Iran. At the time, Sid Sober was the PDAS in NEA. He had a South Asian background. Between him and the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Howie Schaffer, you had a pretty strong team who were dealing with South Asia. The people in the Near East Bureau were just going flat out all the time. There were all these task forces going on whether it was over terrorism, hijackings, or the civil war in Lebanon, or the crisis in South Asia which led to an Indo-Pakistani War, and Kissinger's preoccupation with Israeli-Arab negotiations on the peace process. It was a time when I wonder how the NEA bureau managed to stay on top of everything. There were so many crises going on all the time.

Q: One had the feeling that Iran, being the Shah, was taken care of – give him what he wants and we'll get some money back from him. And with India it was sort of back of the hand. The relationship with the Indian leader was very poor.

ABINGTON: That's true. In Pakistan, the Pakistanis acted as the facilitator for Kissinger's famous secret trip to China. He went to China from Pakistan. He ostensibly was on a visit there. But as I look back during that period, certainly the Israeli-Arab negotiations seemed to be the top priority, but then they would get pushed aside as crises arose like Lebanon or India-Pakistan.

Q: On the Lebanese thing, you had a tribal conflict within Lebanon itself. Was there much we could do about that?

ABINGTON: The actual fighting there was relatively little. Our embassy in West Beirut was in the middle of a free fire zone. We had drawn down to a relatively few number of people. The fighting was so intense that no one could get out and go talk, particularly to the Christian side. During that period in early '76, Frank Meloy, the ambassador, and the economic counselor had gone out to try to go into East Beirut to try to meet with the Christians. They disappeared and the embassy called in and said they were missing. There was a period of time… Everyone was deeply concerned. I informed Roy Atherton and he in turn informed the Secretary. Then I got a telephone call from the Operations Center that said that the bodies of Meloy and Waring and the Lebanese driver, Magrabi, had been found. I went in and informed Roy. Of course, Roy was just devastated by the news. It was a real crisis in terms of trying to deal with the parties in Lebanon. We had no one who could get out and talk to them. Particularly after Meloy's assassination, the embassy basically was in a bunker. People were living in the embassy. They were raiding the commissary for their food. There were artillery duels back and forth outside and it was just an incredibly dangerous situation. It was at that point that Kissinger decided that we needed to send someone into East Beirut to talk to the Christians and figure out what they were up to. Initially, he picked Ed Djerejian to do this, or rather Ed volunteered to do it. Ed spoke fluent Arabic, excellent French. He is an Armenian-American and spoke Armenian. At the time, Ed was the U.S. Consul General in Bordeaux or Marseilles. He joined up with Kissinger on one of Kissinger's trips to Europe and flew back. I believe Roy was on the flight or Joe Sisco. Djerejian talked with Kissinger and mapped out what they were going to do, what he was going to do. They came back to Washington. Djerejian held briefings, met with a number of people, had his instructions. I remember helping him be fitted for a bulletproof vest. I went and got something like $20-25,000 in hundred dollar bills for Ed for expenses. Ed took off with two or three security agents, flew back to Paris, went down to see his wife before he was supposed to go to Cyprus to catch a ferry from Cyprus to Beirut. All of a sudden, I got a phone call from the Operations Center which said that Djerejian had

called in and his wife was ill or upset about his going and he had decided he couldn't go. The security agents were bringing back the $25,000. Kissinger just went ballistic. He was so furious at Djerejian. He was determined to punish him. Ed was kind of exiled for a while to a pretty unimportant job in the European Bureau. He had a promotion rescinded by Kissinger. He overcame this. But Kissinger was absolutely furious over this. Roy Atherton and Joe Sisco protected Djerejian and shielded him from Kissinger's wrath. Kissinger had a famous temper.

As an aside, Sid Sober, the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the time, just rubbed Kissinger the wrong way. Kissinger ordered Atherton or Sisco to get rid of Sid Sober. Sid continued to be the PDAS but we went through elaborate steps to hide the fact from Kissinger that Sid Sober was the PDAS. He would not attend meetings with Kissinger. We would find someone else to go. If Roy was traveling and we had a memo for Kissinger, we put someone else's name down on the memo so that he didn't know that Sid Sober was there. It was a case where Kissinger would be furious at people but then the FS would protect those people.

But after Djerejian pulled out, David Mack, the office director for the Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, volunteered to go to Beirut along with Bob Hope, who at had been a DCM in Beirut and knew all the actors and was working in Personnel. It took tremendous courage. They went to Nicosia. They got on a ferry boat with a bodyguard or two. If the Christians in East Beirut weren't going to protect them, two bodyguards wouldn't have made the slightest bit of difference. But in an act of tremendous courage, they went to East Beirut, spent a week or two there talking to people and then calling in reports and then writing up the reports. That really gave us a window on the thinking. But our ability to influence either the Muslim or the Christian participants in the civil war in Lebanon was very limited. At the time, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians had established a tremendous presence in West Beirut. We worked out through the CIA an informal arrangement with the PLO in terms of the PLO giving some protection to the embassy in Beirut to keep it from being attacked by Lebanese Muslim organizations. The CIA acted as the middleman in doing this. That started the contacts between the PLO and Yasser Arafat. It was in the context of Lebanon and the civil war there in the mid-'70s that we started dealing with them over issues like the security of the embassy in Beirut.

Q: This was at a time when contact with the PLO was strictly forbidden.

ABINGTON: Yes, it was. As part of the 1975 Sinai II disengagement agreement, the side MOU that Prime Minister Rabin insisted on having and we negotiated with the Israelis, one clause in that MOU was that the United States would refrain from any contact with the PLO unless and until the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist. I was told that Kissinger thought this was kind of a throwaway and felt that it would not be any particular constraint on American foreign policy in terms of dealing with this issue. In fact, the security channel became a conduit for discussion with the PLO on political issues as well, but it was carried out through the CIA, not by State Department officials. But as of the time of that MOU, contact with the PLO, which had been allowed before then and people in Beirut and Syria used to talk to Palestinians, after '75 overt contact ended.

Q: There is still a reflection of this as we speak today. The head of the CIA is going out to talk to both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

ABINGTON: That's a different story. We'll get to that later. That role really took place in 1997 when Israeli-Palestinian security contacts broke down and the CIA was asked by the Israeli Shin Bet to facilitate the reestablishment of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination. It's in that context that the CIA and George Tenant got sucked into this.

Q: You were there from '75-'77?

ABINGTON: Yes.

Q: How did the transition when the Carter administration came in… Every time there is an election of a president, promises are made to get the Jewish vote, particularly about the embassy moving to Jerusalem. How did the actual transition work?

ABINGTON: About the time of the election, particularly as the campaign was going on, and I've seen this during other pre-election periods and afterwards, foreign policy issues all of a sudden took a backseat to everything else. At that point the objective was not to let any crises arise which could become an election issue. As we got into August and September of 1976, the amount of work decreased tremendously because people were focused on the conventions, on the campaigns, on the debates. Kissinger himself was much less active. When the election took place and Jimmy Carter won, we went from being tremendously busy to being tremendously not busy simply because everybody was checking in on him. The senior leadership in the State Department was basically wrapping things up. They were not taking any new initiatives or trying to conclude agreements. Of course, any time you have a transition, everybody is tasked to write transition papers for the issue that they're working. There was a tremendous number of papers written by the Near East Bureau during that period because there were so many active problems going on. The very interesting thing about that transition was that once Carter was sworn in and Vance became Secretary of State, Carter focused almost immediately like a laser on the Arab-Israeli situation. Almost from the time of the inauguration and Vance becoming Secretary of State, Roy Atherton stayed on as Assistant Secretary. The focus was on Arab-Israeli issues. The first three or four months of 1977 were extremely busy in terms of thinking through our Middle East policy, what we were trying to achieve, drafting a tremendous number of papers… If you draft a paper for the President from the Secretary of State for a visit or an issue, those papers are fairly short, not more than three or four pages. But we used to do 15-20 page papers for Carter on the Middle East issue, on the Arab-Israeli issue. The Carter administration started off with a focus on the Middle East. The very first trip that Cyrus Vance took abroad was to the Middle East. I organized the trip and put it together, worked out the schedule with Vance's people, worked out with Roy the tasking of all the papers and the preparation of all the trip books. And he went to Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, he may have had a brief stop in Lebanon. That trip then set the stage for visits to Washington of the leaders from Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia for meetings with President Carter. That in turn led to Carter's focus on the peace process and laid the groundwork for continuing Kissinger's efforts, particularly on the Egyptian-Israeli front, which culminated in 1978 in the Camp David agreement and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

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Q: What was the state of relations in that period between Syria and the United States?

ABINGTON: The Assad regime was a very secretive regime. We opened the embassy in Damascus after the 1974 Israel-Syria disengagement agreement which had been brokered by Henry Kissinger. The Syrian regime was very heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union for economic assistance and especially for military assistance. The Soviets were the principal supplier of military equipment to the Syrians. There was a very large Soviet presence in Syria, Soviet military advisors there. The stated goal of President Assad was to achieve military parity with Israel. The relationship between Israel and Syria continued to be very tense. The Egyptian embassy was around the corner from the American Embassy. Syria had broken relations with Egypt over the Camp David summit and the Egyptian-Israeli agreement. The Egyptian Embassy had been broken into by a Syrian mob. Demonstrations like that in Syria only took place at the instigation of the Syrian government. The Egyptian Embassy was basically ransacked and was pretty much in ruin. That was a clear sign by President Assad that he disapproved of Sadat's policies. There was a lot of tension between the United States and the Syrian government because the U.S. government was trying to promote the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Of course, the majority of the Arab world had broken relations with Egypt, had expelled Egypt from the Arab League. The Arab League had moved from Cairo to Tunis. The United States was not only pushing the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement but the second part of that agreement, which was autonomy for the Palestinians and trying to promote those negotiations, which in fact started and were ongoing. The PLO at the time was headquartered in Beirut in '79 but there was a love-hate relationship between the PLO led by Yasser Arafat and President Assad. Assad felt that Syria was really the center of the Arab world, that it represented Arab nationalist aspirations. He very much tried to control the Palestinian issue in terms of not wanting a separate peace. He made threatening noises towards King Hussein when he thought that Hussein might be edging towards negotiations with Israel. There was a lot of tension between the United States and Syria during this period. The nature of the Syrian regime was such that it was a very secretive regime. We had relatively limited contacts with political figures in the regime. The ambassador would see Assad from time to time when there were visitors, the Secretary of State or congressional delegations. But in general, the American ambassador did not have access to President Assad for meetings or for appointments to discuss issues. The primary person that the ambassador dealt with was the Syrian Foreign Minister, Abdel Halim Khaddam, who is still a vice president in the Syrian regime even though Assad has died. We had very little official access to Syrian officials and to the Baath Party. They kept us at arm's length and when we did have discussions with them they were fairly pro forma, a very heavy dose of Syrian propaganda. It was quite difficult to figure out what was going on in Syria. Of course, there was the ongoing Lebanon problem. By that point, 1979, Syria had something like 30-35,000 troops in Lebanon. It controlled Beirut. It controlled the Bekaa Valley. In between the Syrian-controlled area and the Lebanese border was the PLO. Of course, there were clashes at the time. There were infiltration attempts by the PLO into Israel. There were exchanges of fire. There were Israeli incursions into southern Lebanon. But there was this understanding between Syria and Israel that even though Israel was going into Lebanon the area where it would operate ground forces would only be between the Lebanese-Israeli border and the Litani River. North of the Litani River were Syrian troops and Israel was careful not to go north of the Litani River and confront Syrian troops with ground operations. Israel was carrying on air raids against Palestinian targets in West Beirut. You had an incredibly unstable situation. And you had a relatively hostile Syrian regime.

You had an internal situation in Syria that was very complicated because the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni organization, was carrying out major attacks of terrorism and assassinations against the Alaoui Baathist regime of Syria. You had a break in relations between Syria and Iraq because of the rivalry between Hafez El-Assad and Saddam Hussein, two different factions of the Baath Party, each saying that they were the legitimate party, not recognizing the other. It was an incredibly complex mix of a lot of different issues and it was very difficult to figure out what was going on in Damascus because of the nature of this regime.

When I got to Damascus, there was the announcement that Syria and Iraq were going to unite. This had been spurred by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. But within a matter of a couple of months, the whole process of discussing unification between Syria and Iraq broke down into tremendous acrimony which led eventually to a break in diplomatic relations between Syria and Iraq. It was during this period that the Muslim Brotherhood attacks against the Syrian regime started intensifying. There was intelligence and we knew that the Syrian government felt that the Muslim Brotherhood attacks were being assisted by the Iraqis in terms of providing explosives, arms, infiltrating people across the Iraqi-Syrian border. There also was some evidence that Muslim Brotherhood types in Saudi Arabia were sending money and providing guidance to people inside Syria. There was also a very deep-seated Syrian belief that the Jordanian government was allowing Muslim Brotherhood operatives safe haven in Amman and was allowing them to infiltrate across the border. When I first got there in ’79 for the next year to year and a half there was a mounting internal crisis over this challenge to the Alaoui regime. This took the form of assassination of Alaoui political and military figures. The Muslim Brotherhood started assassinating Soviet military advisors and carrying out bombing attacks against Soviet military compounds and very brutal bombing attacks against Syrian government facilities as well. I think it’s really interesting because these bombing attacks were as brutal as anything that’s taken place in the Middle East in the last 20 years yet because of the secretive nature of the Syrian regime they tried to cover up the attacks. It was very difficult to get accurate information about who had been killed and so forth. In the summer of 1980, a suicide bomber drove a car to Syrian air force headquarters and the Syrian air force not only was a military arm but it was a military intelligence arm that Assad relied on very much. It was one of the predominant military intelligence units. And he was an air force officer himself. This car bomb killed around 50-60 people in the building. I can remember when the bomb went off, I was in the DCM’s office and you could see the windows bulge from the concussion of the bomb. Fortunately, we had Mylar on the windows. Otherwise it would have blown the windows out. I remember going to the American school about a block away from air force headquarters. There was this huge explosion. The Syrians sealed the area off, would not let any foreigners in and were busy removing casualties. We heard through various sources that 50-70 people had been killed. Fortunately, the American community school had just been adjourned for summer vacation. There were a number of windows blown out in the school. I remember walking on the school grounds and finding a boot with a foot in it that had been blown a block or so away from the site of this explosion. These bombings were incredibly brutal.

Q: And it’s something that hasn’t raised much notice in the West.

ABINGTON: There was another bombing in ’80 or ’81 in downtown Damascus. A big car bomb went off and killed about 200 people. It took place at the height of the lunch hour rush time.

Everyone would go home for lunch and take a nap in the afternoon and then resume work in the late afternoon. This very powerful bomb went off in a very busy part of Damascus. It was on a Sunday. It blew up about three or four buses packed with people. I saw the area. It literally took the sides of a couple of apartment buildings off. I don't think we ever knew how many people were killed by that. But we estimated that there were 200-300 deaths. It created a very dangerous and uncertain situation in Syria. It led to increasing tension between Syria and its Arab neighbors.

Q: I would have thought that the United States would be an obvious target since we were such a promoter of this peace. Of course, this was against Syria. It had nothing to do with the peace process.

ABINGTON: It had nothing to do with the peace process, but there were conversations with the Syrian Foreign Minister in which he voiced very strong suspicion that the U.S. was involved in the bombings, that the United States was giving through the CIA assistance to the Muslim Brotherhood. In that part of the world, there is a very deep feeling of the omnipotent power of the CIA and people are very wrapped up in conspiracies. Of course, the CIA had been involved in a lot of stuff in the region. One could understand why the Syrians were suspicious. On one occasion, the ambassador had been summoned by the foreign minister-

Q: Who was the ambassador?

ABINGTON: The first two years I was there, it was Talcott Seelye. Then from '81 to '82 it was Bob Paganelli. Seelye was summoned by Khaddam. I was head of the political section, so I always went along as notetaker and wrote all the cables. Khaddam produced a couple of walkie talkies made by Motorola and said that these walkie talkies had been recovered from the bodies of a couple of Muslim Brotherhood types and he cited this as proof that the United States was involved in aiding the Muslim Brotherhood. I remember Seelye denying it but said that he would send these walkie talkies back to Washington, the information on them and so forth, and we would try to get to the bottom of it. Of course, the Syrian suspicion was heightened because we had a ban on the export of any kind of sensitive equipment to Syria. I can recall that the Syrians had asked for Motorola walkie talkies that they wanted to use for the Syrian presidential guard. It was a major decision whether or not to approve the export license of these Motorola radios to the Syrians even though it was for presidential security. So, one can understand the suspicion of the Syrians. If they wanted these Motorola radios and we were making such a big deal out of it and at the same time they found these Motorola radios on the bodies of Muslim Brotherhood, they concluded that somehow the United States was involved.

Q: It was probably an off the shelf item.

ABINGTON: I think that's what it turned out to be, an off the shelf item that had been smuggled into Lebanon and used as communication devices for these Brotherhood types.

Q: The Hamas… That's when the real attack came on the Muslim Brotherhood. When did that happen? Could you explain what that was?

ABINGTON: Let me get there first. There was kind of a mounting crisis. In early 1981, there was

serious concern after the Reagan administration had taken over that the Syrian government was about to invade Jordan. Relations between Assad and Hussein had deteriorated considerably over the course of the previous year because of a really deep-seated Syrian suspicion that somehow the Hashemite government was aiding the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, I suspected that they were aiding them as well. Jordanian intelligence is very good. There certainly was a pretty fair amount of evidence that senior Muslim Brotherhood people were headquartered in Amman, and I just cannot believe that the Jordanian intelligence didn't know they were there. Now, was Jordanian intelligence turning a blind eye or actively helping them? I don't know. But Assad made some very threatening military moves with armored divisions toward the Jordanian border. I can remember writing a telegram. We had been notified by the Near East Bureau that the Reagan administration was increasingly concerned about what was going on. I remember writing an analysis which we sent in very high precedent to Washington. I was told there was a National Security Council meeting going on and the analysis was that these were threatening moves by Assad to try to put pressure on Hussein because of his belief that the Jordanians were helping the Muslim Brotherhood but that Assad was a very cautious person and knew that if he were to actually make a threatening move against Jordan it would inevitably lead to an Israeli military action. At the time, Begin was the prime minister and Sharon was the defense minister. It was our assessment that Assad was not going to invade Jordan but was merely trying to carry on a war of nerves and threaten the Jordanians. But given his cautiousness he would not actually send troops into Jordan and reminding people that in 1970 it was Assad's predecessor who actually sent tanks across the border that led to the coup that brought Assad to power. This was very important because one of the options being looked at – and being recommended by some of the ideologues in the State Department – was that the U.S. should carry out air strikes against Syria not only to protect Jordan but indirectly to send a message to the Soviets that the United States would not tolerate Soviet surrogates, which Syrian was looked upon as, threatening America's friends in the region. It was people like Rick Burt and Paul Wolfowitz who were advocating the use of U.S. air strikes against Syria.

Q: This was very early in the Reagan administration when the anti-Soviet/anti-communist force was there, before reality began to dilute it.

ABINGTON: It was before reality started, but it could have been very dangerous. These people were really ideologues. You didn't have a very strong group of people in place at the time. Cap Weinberger was strong. But you had Dick Allen as the national security advisor. He was very weak. You had Al Haig as Secretary of State, who was kind of wacko. You had Rick Burt. You had Paul Wolfowitz. Real hardliners.

Q: Richard Perle was in there, too.

ABINGTON: Richard Perle was at the Defense Department. Today it's kind of hard to imagine that the Reagan administration seriously considered this option but they were looking at it. The cable that I did really helped convince people that it was not as big a crisis as it appeared.

Meanwhile, the Israelis were egging us on. The Israelis were providing us intelligence in their assessment that Syria was seriously considering invading Jordan. But Begin and Sharon had their own agenda. They wanted to whack the Syrians in order to get at the Palestinians. I saw this

throughout the period. As I was reading the telegrams from the defense attaches in Tel Aviv and Ambassador Sam Lewis' talks with the Israelis, I felt that the Israelis were giving us a very one-sided, biased assessment of Syria and Syrian intentions and that they had their own agenda very much at work. But you see this frequently. Washington was predisposed to listen to the Israelis. Assad was viewed as hostile to American interests. He certainly had no defenders in Washington at the time, still doesn't. But this lack of understanding of what was really going on and the predilection to credit Israeli assessments much more than was warranted, that was 20 years ago and we still see it today.

Q: What happened after this crisis?

ABINGTON: We had an excellent military attaché who was on the road all the time. He was an Army lieutenant colonel. He was first rate, spoke Arabic very well. He must have worked 80 hours a week. He and his assistant attaché, an enlisted man, were on the road all the time checking out military deployments. He had a fantastic collection of the military flashes that are painted on the rear ends of vehicles so that you know what unit they are. His reporting was terrific in terms of tracking the movement of Syrian military units. He would be up in the middle of the night driving around, darting in and out of convoys. I really felt that the Israelis… His reporting was shared with the Israelis and the Israelis - I saw this on several occasions – would say that they had an informant who alleged that the Syrians were doing a, b, and c. One specific incident had to do with the deployment of SCUD missiles. I know that we in the embassy in Damascus felt that this was a crock - the CIA station chief, the military attaché, myself – because it didn't make sense what the Israelis were alleging in terms of deployment of SCUD missiles. This guy went out in the middle of the night at some danger to himself because Syrians were not friendly and he confirmed that – and he was instructed to do so by Washington, by DIA – the SCUD missiles had not been deployed. It was our assessment that the Israelis were using these fabricated sources or maybe they were using signal intelligence and getting us to check it out. So, we were sort of playing their game. But after the initial deployment, through his checking out the situation on the ground… In fact, this was before satellite technology really developed to the point where we had real time intelligence from the satellites. The observation of military attaches was very important. This was true in Syria and it was certainly true in Israel. The Israelis were doing things and it was our military attaches who would see what was happening on the ground that gave us the heads up on various things. The Jordanian border calmed down, but these assassinations were still going on. It was during the spring or summer of 1981 that this section of Hamas, the old section of Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, really rose up against the government forces in the area. Hafez El-Assad in consultation with the Alaoui military leaders – and the Alaoui were in all the key military positions, the intelligence units, the special forces, a group called the Defense Forces which was headed by Assad's brother and was deployed in the Damascus area to defend the Alaoui regime – they decided that they had had enough of this uprising, of these assassinations. One has to keep in mind that it was very much targeted against Alaouis. There were many Alaoui officials who were assassinated because they were Alaoui. There had been these brutal car bombings. The government decided that it was going to crush the situation once and for all. Assad's brother, Rifaat El-Assad, deployed the Defense Forces equipped with T-72 tanks to Hamas, closed off the area, went in and just leveled this area where the Muslim Brotherhood was holed up. It was a civilian area. Basically, they shelled it and then they brought in bulldozers and just bulldozed the whole thing. No one knows how many people were killed. I know that it's become the common

wisdom that 10,000 were killed. In fact, I don't think anyone really knows. But the Syrians sealed off the area. No one could get in or out for about a week until it was over. That really broke the back of the Muslim Brotherhood. There were assassinations, a few bombings, after that. In fact, once when I was going from where the embassy was to a meeting with some Australian colleagues in an area west of Beirut in a suburb called Mezzay, a bomb blew up about 50 yards from my car. It was incredibly frightening because it was a bomb on one of these three-wheel Suzuki vans. The Syrian security people immediately came out and started stopping cars. There was a car in front of me, a white Peugeot. There were three people in it. They panicked and they just were yelled at by the security people to stop. They kept going. This must have been 10-15 yards from me. The security people just opened up with AK-47s and killed all three people in the car. And they turned around and started pointing their guns at me. I was in a little Volkswagen Rabbit and stopped, held my hands in the air, and kept shouting in Arabic that I was a diplomat. They came over and looked at me and told me to get out of there. I haven't been frightened that much many times. You could see how this terrorism really had the regime on edge.

Q: Were you there when the Israelis invaded Lebanon?

ABINGTON: Yes.

Q: How did that go over?

ABINGTON: We could see the buildup. As we read the reporting from the embassy in Tel Aviv and what was in the Israeli press, particularly people like a very famous Israeli military analyst named Zeb Ship, who's been writing for 25 years, his analyses, obviously based on conversations with Sharon and the IDF, you could see the Israeli invasion coming. You could see that the Israelis were looking for an excuse to invade Lebanon and to take out the PLO. During the fall of '81 through the winter, you could see a steadily mounting pressure with more and more belligerent noises being made by Begin and particularly Sharon. It was very clear that Sharon was pushing the limits of the red lines. These informal understandings that the U.S. had helped negotiate, these understandings of what each side could and could not do. One red line was that the Israelis would not carry out air strikes against Syrian forces. The Israeli air force carried out attacks in late '81/early '82, hit targets in the Bekaa, and killed Syrian troops. This was viewed by the Syrians as the Israelis breaking one of the understandings that the United States had negotiated. I remember the Syrians came to us and said, "What are you going to do about this? You helped broker this. This is what the Israelis have done, violating the understanding." Of course, as usual when something like this happened, we sat on our hands and didn't do anything because the Israelis, particularly with someone like Sharon as defense minister, basically blew us off. This was a time when there was an increasingly acrimonious relationship between Sam Lewis and Sharon and to a degree Menachem Begin. Whenever he would go in and discuss things particularly on instructions to raise U.S. concerns, he would get reamed out by Begin or Sharon and on occasion they would go out and just publicly berate the United States for questioning Israeli motivation with Sam Lewis standing beside him. But the embassies in Tel Aviv and Damascus frankly got into a very acrimonious relationship in terms of our competing analyses of Israeli intentions. We both became very shrill in what we were saying to Washington, not very professional. We saw the worst in Israeli motives and we basically were right. The embassy in Tel Aviv was trying to defend what the Israelis were doing. We thought in Damascus they were looking the other way and not

realizing that the Israelis were setting up a situation so they could invade Lebanon. But when the Israelis violated this understanding, the Syrian reaction, Assad's reaction, was to move SA-3 and SA-6 missiles into the Bekaa Valley in order to defend troops there. His rationale was, "If the Israelis do not abide by the understandings and the Americans don't do anything to reassure us that this won't happen again, we therefore have to take these steps to defend our troops in the Bekaa." That led to a crisis once the Syrians moved those missiles in. That upset the status quo. The Israelis looked upon that as a serious threat to their ability to fly over Lebanon and so forth. Of course, the Syrians said, "The Israelis have no right to fly over Lebanon. They have no right. They have attacked our troops. They are violating Lebanese air space. They violated an understanding against attacking Syrian troops. We have moved these missiles in to defend our troops." The United States embarked on – and I think Phil Habib was the primary negotiator – an effort to persuade the Syrians to withdraw their missiles that was not successful. So, you had this period of mounting tension in late '81 and the first half of '82 caused by these events, by continuing Palestinian PLO attacks against Israel, and it was a crisis that everyone could see coming. I remember sitting on my balcony of my apartment in Damascus, which overlooked Assad's house, early Sunday morning at about 7:00. I had my radio on and was listening to the BBC. The first story was that Palestinians had attempted to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in London, Shlomo Argov, and had shot him, seriously wounding him in the head. He was in a coma and it was not known whether he was going to live or not. I listened to that and said, "The Israelis are going to invade Lebanon today." I called up the ambassador, Paganelli, and told him this. I said, "It's my belief that this is the excuse that Sharon's been looking for and that there will be an invasion." In fact, they did invade that day.

Q: Did the Syrians come to us during this invasion which led to the siege of Beirut? There was fighting with Syria, wasn't there?

ABINGTON: Yes, there was, but the Israelis – and this is where Sharon was roundly condemned by the United States and in fact a commission of inquiry in Israel felt that Sharon had misled Begin and the Israeli cabinet as to what his intentions were. It was initially called the Peace for Galilee Campaign. Initially the stated intentions were to go up to the Litani River and clear out the Palestinian presence in southern Lebanon. People anticipated that there would be an Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon for some period of time in order to keep the PLO out. But at that point, people really did not know what Sharon's intentions were. Meanwhile, the Mossad and Sharon and Begin had been negotiating secretly with the Maronites in Beirut, with the Gemayels and the Chamouns. The Israelis and the Lebanese Maronites, the Phalangists, had worked out this scheme that the U.S. was really not aware of to drive out the Palestinians from Lebanon - I don't know if the intention was to drive out the Syrians as well – and to install a very strong Phalangist government in Beirut that would enter into an unofficial alliance with Israel. This was all unbeknown to American policymakers. So, this was an unfolding event. Every day that the invasion went on, Israel kept expanding the scope of its military operations. The Syrians from the beginning were very alarmed by this. They saw this as a crisis. They deeply mistrusted Sharon and Begin and they called in Paganelli daily to consult about it. But as the war went on, as the Israelis crossed the Litani, they came into contact with Syrian tank units and they fought pretty fierce battles near Beirut and in the Bekaa and they destroyed a number of Israeli tank units. They attacked the Syrian missile units that had been deployed in the Bekaa and destroyed all of them without losing a single Israeli plane. The Syrian air force, which had carried on periodic clashes with Israel over Lebanese air space, came to the defense of Syrian forces in the Bekaa. In what was

a stunning air battle, the Israelis shot down something like 85 Syrian jet fighters without losing a single plane of their own. At that point, the Israelis had uncontested control of Lebanese air space and the siege of Beirut started.

L. DEAN BROWN
Special Envoy
Beirut (1976)

Ambassador L. Dean Brown was born in New York in 1920. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University in 1942 he served in the US Army from 1942-1946. His career has included positions in Belgium Congo, Ottawa, Paris, EUR, Rabat, Senegal and the Gambia, Lebanon, and an ambassadorship to Jordan. Ambassador Brown was interviewed by Horace J. Torbert in May 1989.

BROWN: I went to the Middle East Institute, where I was president. The next year, King Hussein was coming on a visit.

Q: *Is that, by the way, a professional job?*

BROWN: Yes, full-time job. The next year, King Hussein was coming on a visit, so I went out to the airport, Andrews Airport, and I stood at the very end of the line. So Henry came down the line with him, and he looked at me. I said, "Hello, Henry." He said, "Got your car here?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, come on straight to the State Department."

I got to the State Department, and he said, "Why don't you go to Beirut?"

I said, "What for?"

He said, "Mac Godley is very sick and he's back here. We don't know if he's going to get well enough to go back, and it's a real mess out there. Everybody tells me we should have somebody out there in charge of the place." He said, "Also, I can't understand a word they're saying. They send these long, lengthy telegrams about people I've never heard of and parties I've never heard of." He said, "Why don't you see if you can go out there and talk to those people and see if you can have some influence."

I said, "Sure, I'll go. When should I leave?"

He said, "How about this afternoon?"

I said, "Sure."

Q: *You were going out as what? Just as a personal representative?*

BROWN: A personal representative of the President, yes. Special envoy and representative of the President.

I said, "I'm not going to do it permanently. I don't want to go back into the Foreign Service. I'll do it for a couple of months."

So I flew to London, and on to Beirut. It was pretty awful, because this was '76. The war hadn't really started. The civil war, which is still going on, started in '75. But by my time it had become intense. Every group had lots of arms. All the politicians were trying to use the Palestinians against each other. Everyone was at everyone's throat.

The Maronite leadership--the president is always a Christian Maronite in Lebanon. The Maronite leadership was deathly afraid that the leftists, which were the Druze and others, were getting support from other leftist regimes such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, all that, and that they were really threatened. They wanted help.

So I went around and saw all those politicians, and it was a hairy business because it was a full-blast revolution, blowing up everything. I had a car; I had two cars shot up on me, but not badly. Then after a while, I didn't use embassy cars; I hired taxis. Went to the airport in taxis.

Q: *Did you have any armor underneath your cars in the embassy?*

BROWN: Yes, yes. Well, two were armored.

Q: *So you had some. That still isn't going to help you very much.*

BROWN: It isn't going to help you very much. It's all right. It gives you that measure of protection as long as you control your driver. I learned in Jordan how to control drivers, which is you tell them to turn; don't let him tell you when to turn. And in Beirut, I always drove with a pistol aimed at the driver, and a bodyguard, whom I didn't trust at all. He's the one who betrayed Frank Meloy when Frank was killed. The driver was killed. They were an untrustworthy group of people.

I went to see Raymond Eddé, a well connected Maronite Rome, prominent family. His whole garden had been blown up by an artillery shell. He said, "It's all your fault. This is what the CIA did to me." I said, "The CIA didn't arm those people to blow up your garden." He said, "Mr. Ambassador, you're very badly informed." [Laughter]

Q: *They certainly managed to get themselves into an almost incredible situation.*

BROWN: Impossible situation. I finally came back. What I suggested to Henry is that we think very seriously of getting another ambassador out there who didn't know the area very well, but who had been in tough posts. Frank Meloy was the one. He had had Salvador and Santa Domingo. Frank came, and I flew out. I said I didn't want to be in town when Frank came, because he should be in charge. So I met him in Rome, and we spent three or four days in Rome, talking together about all sorts of things. Then he went down there, and shortly thereafter he was killed.

So the President asked me to go back, and I said yes. I found a plane ready to go. And my wife called up Henry Kissinger and said to him, "This is June. You can't do it." And she said, "If he can do it, he can go back and get Frank's body, but he's not going to go back there and serve in that place again. Frank was one of our best friends; he's just been killed, and I don't want to lose my husband that way."

I just went back, got Frank and the other bodies and brought them back to the States. Then pretty much stayed out of Lebanese affairs thereafter.

GEORGE M. LANE
Chargé d'Affaires
Beirut (1976-1978)

Ambassador George M. Lane was born in Maryland in 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1951 and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1957. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1954. Ambassador Lane's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Beirut, Aleppo, Rabat, Benghazi, and an ambassadorship to Yemen. He was interviewed in 1990 by Richard Nethercut.

LANE: Then, again, while we were hoping for a third year in Swaziland -- a pleasant place to live and work -- there was the sudden assassination of Frank Meloy and Bob Waring in Beirut, and the Department sent me a telegram ordering me back to Washington on consultations. In fact, it was a flash telegram. I claim to be the only Officer in the Foreign Service who ever got consultation orders by flash telegram.

Q: Could you just elaborate when you said Frank Meloy and Waring. Could you identify their positions in the Embassy?

LANE: Frank Meloy was the Ambassador who had quite recently been assigned to Beirut. And Bob Waring was the Economic Counselor. He'd been there for quite a long time, and was very well connected with a lot people in Lebanon and was therefore the Ambassador's right hand man as he was learning his way around.

Q: You were then sent as Chargé d'Affaires. Had there been a Deputy Chief of Mission at the time?

LANE: What happened actually was, that I was ordered back to Washington on consultation, as was another officer, because as I understood it, the Secretary, that is, Dr. Kissinger, hadn't quite made up his mind whether or not he was going to close the post entirely, or whether he was going to try to keep the Embassy open in spite of the civil war that was then going on in Lebanon, and in spite of this disaster -- this tragedy -- with our Ambassador and Economic Counselor. The first person to go to head the mission was Talcott Seelye. Talcott Seelye was at that point Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. I think he was traveling in Africa, and he went in,

I think, within about 48 hours just as a symbolic gesture to show that we were not going to be driven out of Lebanon by the assassination of our Ambassador. But it was a stop-gap measure because it was understood that Talcott was not going to go in as Ambassador. He had just taken on his AF responsibility, he had other things to do. But the question was, what do we do now with our Embassy in Beirut, having suffered this tragedy. So having gone back to Washington at breakneck speed in response to the flash telegram, and left Swaziland, of course, without saying goodbye to anybody, not even anybody in the Foreign Ministry, never mind anybody else in the diplomatic corps, or the general society, and with instructions not to tell anybody where I might be going next, I then sat in Washington for two weeks cooling my heels, and trying to read in on the Lebanese situation in case I was going to go. While the decision and the argument went back and forth, should we keep an Embassy open just as a presence to enable us to talk to some people in the Lebanese situation, or was it not worth it, should we simply close the Embassy and pull out. This argument went on for two weeks, as I understand it. Larry Eagleburger would be able to tell you a lot more about this than I can.

During this period, the situation got worse in Lebanon. It was impossible to get in by air because the airport was closed. It was impossible to get in by sea, and the overland route was very frequently blocked by the fighting between Damascus and Beirut, along that route. I can't remember the dates exactly, but it must have been mid-July -- late July -- President Ford then ordered the second evacuation of Americans from Beirut -- of American civilians. Of course, we had a lot of people living and working in Beirut. It was the central place for all sorts of American businessmen, and media. A lot of them had gone out in the earlier evacuation in June, but some had stayed, and some had even come back. So the second evacuation was ordered for July, and the USG suddenly realized that if they were going to send somebody in to be the Charge, this was the time because it wouldn't be possible perhaps even to get anybody in if they didn't do it then. So it was a typical hurry-up and wait kind of a thing. It was hurry-up, and then wait, and then hurry- up again because they called me up on Saturday and said, "Be ready to go in three hours." The reason, I think, I was chosen was that the other fellow had been told -- as I had been told -- that we could both go away for the weekend, because no decision would be made. But I had decided not to come up here (to Westminster, Mass.) for the weekend because I didn't think there was time. So rather than do that I just stayed where I was in Washington. So I was available Saturday night. So I was the guy they sent.

Q: You were flown in, were you? And by yourself?

LANE: What happened was, that I went from Washington to Athens by commercial airline, from Athens to a U.S. aircraft carrier by Cob aircraft -- it landed on the aircraft carrier; from the aircraft carrier to the landing ship by helicopter, and from the landing ship into Beirut -- Bain Militaire -- by landing craft (LST). I went in on the landing craft that was evacuating all the people coming out from the Bain Militaire area of Beirut. So there I was in my civilian clothes sitting on six pouch bags full of communication equipment which I was carrying in, with all these Navy guys in their flak suits and not sure what they were going to run into going into Beirut because at this point the State Department had organized the security on the beach with the PLO. The PLO was the organization that really had more control over West Beirut than any other organization. So, in fact, we worked with the PLO to organize the security so that the American civilians, who were moving to this area to get on the landing ship, wouldn't be shot at. That was one of our few examples of

cooperation with the PLO.

Q: That was quite a baptism under fire in arriving at your first time as the Charge in Beirut. Could you tell me how you established yourself, and how you conducted relations with the Lebanese authorities, or whoever were the persons that you ended up dealing with?

LANE: Yes. This was a time when we were operating with a real skeleton staff, if you'll pardon the expression, in Beirut. All dependents had been evacuated from the Embassy staff, and we cut down to the bare minimum, we thought, to keep the Embassy going including four Marine Guards and a Gunny. So we did have Marine Guards standing watch at all times. But we all lived, worked, and ate in the Embassy -- in the chancellery building -- for about six months, from about August of 1976 until about February 1977. For the first month, Ray Hunt was there and he outranked me, and so he was the Charge. But then the road to Damascus opened, and he was able to get out. So basically from the end of August until February '77 when Dick Parker came in and took over as Ambassador, I was the Charge. And it was very difficult to establish any kind of contact with the official authorities in Lebanon because Beirut was split right down the middle by the so-called green line. The U.S. Embassy was located in West Beirut where the Muslim and Palestinian factions were in control. So the only people that I could go to see were basically the opponents of the government -- the opponents of the president.

Q: The president at that time was...

LANE: ...was Elias Sarkis. Sarkis had just taken over as president during this period. In fact, Ambassador Meloy was on his way to see president-elect Sarkis of Lebanon when he was killed. Actually I think Sarkis took over in September officially but he'd been elected earlier. So everybody knew he was going to be the president, and the fellow who was actually in the office, Suleiman Franjieh, was a lame duck. Everybody wanted him to retire, resign, so Sarkis, who looked like a peacemaker could take over, but Suleiman Franjieh absolutely refused to do so and stayed on until the very last day of his mandate.

So what I did for the first several months at least, was go around and occasionally visit the leading Lebanese political figures who were available in the West Beirut. I did not initially try to cross that green line, which was where Ambassador Frank Meloy and Bob Waring had been killed. Actually, I think it was Christmas time of '76 I came home on leave -- I managed to come out -- and Bob Houghton came over and sat in for me for a while. It was also during this period when Bob Houghton and David Mack conducted a special mission out of Cyprus to visit the Christian leaders in East Beirut, because I wasn't able to get across to see them at that point.

Q: So it was easier to go from Cyprus to East Beirut than it was to go from West Beirut to East Beirut?

LANE: Exactly. Things improved towards the end of 1976. The Syrians came in -- beginning really in June of '76 -- the Syrians started moving very slowly in taking control of various parts of Lebanon. And by the end of '76 they had established a kind of order, and there was a kind of truce. We thought the destruction that had gone on in late '76-'75 when it all started, April '75, was just horrendous, and things couldn't be worse, but they got steadily worse. In fact, my wife and I often

reminisce that our life there, when she finally came out to join me in February of '77, from then until about July of '78 when we left, was really fairly pleasant. There were a lot of places we could go, a lot of places we couldn't, and were occasionally snipers would shoot at us. But compared to what has happened in Lebanon since, and what happened before, it really now in retrospect was the moment of calm and sanity compared to what has gone on since then.

During that time -- it must have been early '77, January of '77 perhaps -- when I finally did get permission from the Department to make a trip across the green line, and go visit myself some of the leaders, President Sarkis, ex-president Franjieh, former president Chamoun, and various other Christian leaders. But during that initial period in Beirut I used to say that I had the best private army in Lebanon, because after the assassination of the previous Ambassador, of course, all sorts of security precautions had been beefed up. I was the only one really who got to leave the Embassy, and that was almost always only on official calls. I always traveled in a bullet proof car -- an armored car with a lead car, and a follow car with four or five body guards in each car, carefully recruited from the elite of Lebanese security forces -- one Druze, one Greek Orthodox, one Sunni, one Shia all the religions were represented in case we got into a situation where there was a religious problem there would be a co-religionist of each of the groups in Lebanon who was part of my team. One guy was the former karate champion of Lebanon, one was a weight-lifting champion of Lebanon, one was a famous member of their riot squad who had a patented technique for rendering people unconscious with one blow. It was quite a group.

Q: Were you ever threatened? Was there ever an attempt to attack you?

LANE: Not me, as me. I mean there were a couple of cases where I got fired at by snipers. There was at least one case where a stray 50 caliber round came sailing through the wooden shutter on the edge of the window of the apartment I was living in. But those are sort of accidents of living in a war zone, much more than somebody deciding, "We're going to go out and get the American Charge." As I have often said, if the PLO had wanted to blow me away, they could have done it anytime they wanted to because they had all kinds of assets in West Beirut -- far more than anybody else. They knew where I was going, I'm sure, even though we tried to keep that relatively quiet. But if I was making a call on the leader of the Druze, it wouldn't be very hard for the Palestinians to find out very quickly where I was, and follow me back. While I had this protection -- the lead car, and me in the middle car, and a follow car, and armored plate and guns, and all that -- still the Palestinians with the assets that they had, the PLO could have blown me away anytime they wanted to.

Q: Did that sort of situation, and possibility, affect the atmosphere of the staff, and of yourself? Would you characterize the living, and working conditions, and morale?

LANE: Yes. We were definitely under siege for three or four months, and it wasn't pleasant during this period when everybody had to live, work and eat in the chancellery building. When you really couldn't go out unless you had a very official appointment, and unless you had a body guard with you. One of the things that Ray Hunt did, was to organize a mess so that we were all eating together, and he hired a cook to set that up. Otherwise you'd find people eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in their rooms whenever they could, or trying to cook over a hot plate, and that's terrible. But before Ray left he had gotten this organized, so we basically met three times a day for

meals.

Q: Were there medical problems of any type? Psychological problems? Did you have your own form of entertainment?

LANE: Not serious. We had a lot of movies that came in the pouch bag. That was the activity every night, everyone would watch movies and, of course, we were pretty busy, we were all working which was the best thing to have happen. If you weren't working 12-14 hour days, you'd go crazy in a situation like that. But there was a lot to do, and we were never quite sure if and when a new battle would break out between the Christians and the Muslims, and the U.S. Embassy was located pretty close to no-man's land. So we could have very easily been in a war zone.

Q: Were some of the other Embassies located in East Beirut? Were you able to have any sort of social contact outside the Embassy at that time?

LANE: Very little. There weren't very many Embassies left at that point. The British were just down the road, and we saw a fair amount of the British both personally and professionally. As happens so often in the Foreign Service, but really has only happened to me once, the man who was my counterpart in Benghazi during Qadhafi's revolution, who had headed a much larger British Embassy office in Benghazi, was the British Ambassador in Beirut when I was there as Charge. He is now Sir Peter Wakefield. So we obviously had some things in common, and talked to each other frequently. But during those three or four months, before things opened up, it was fairly tight.

Q: Then how did things change with the arrival of Ambassador Parker, and did that change the way in which the U.S. GOVERNMENT related to the Lebanese authorities?

LANE: Yes. By the time Ambassador Parker arrived, dependents were returning, and the situation had gotten better. You could move back and forth across the green line on a fairly regular basis. There were always incidents, but people moved around in West Beirut at night, social life resumed, people gave dinner parties, people went to and fro. Things were almost back to "normal" for almost a year there.

Q: So that when you left things were fairly normal, were they?

LANE: Yes, I guess it's fair to say that. It's hard to think back. Of course, there was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in March of '78 -- Operation Litani -- the first time the Israelis went in to try to wipe out the Palestinian PLO encampments in Southern Lebanon, which led to the creation of UNIFIL, and that sort of thing. That was in '78.

Q: Could you explain what UNIFIL is?

LANE: That was the United Nations force in Lebanon which was created by the United Nations as an attempt to put a buffer zone between the Israelis and the rest of Lebanon, so to speak. The Israelis always complained that there were occasional attacks across the border by Palestinian units who would sneak into south Lebanon and fire rockets into northern Israeli, and then retreat.

They'd disappear. Very frustrating for the Israelis, very frustrating for the inhabitants of the area because what the Israelis would do in return, was to pound them. Of course, the people who did the dirty work were no longer there. The Palestinians would run in with a mortar or rocket launcher, fire off some rounds, disappear, and Israeli retaliation would come on the heads of the poor Shia farmers who lived there. But this caused a very nasty situation, more dangerous politically for the Israelis than militarily, and particularly with the arrival of the Begin government in '77 in Israel. For the first time the Labor party and its allies were no longer in power in Israel and the more hardline, right wing government came into power, started meddling, if you will, dealing much more effectively with the Christian Lebanese against the Palestinians and the Muslims in Lebanon. So frankly, I think, things started to get worse at that point.

Q: Then with this increased Israeli activity concerning Southern Lebanon in early '78, how did that effect the Embassy's relations with the Lebanese authorities? Did that mean that a good deal of your attention and time was spent countering Lebanese concerns?

LANE: Our relationship with the Lebanese authorities was really very close beginning with the time when the security situation got better. We could move back and forth, and Ambassador Parker arrived, who was a brilliant Ambassador, and who had long experience in Lebanon and was able to take advantage of that. Basically the Lebanese were upset that obviously the Israelis were coming into their country, and they were counting on us, as their number one supporter, to get the Israelis out, and to do everything we could to really support the territorial integrity of Lebanon which we always said we supported. And they were disappointed, I think, that we weren't able to do more.

MORRIS DRAPER
NEA, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon
Washington, DC (1976-1978)

Morris Draper was born in California in 1928 and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1952. An Arabic language officer, Mr. Draper served in a number of Middle East posts including Beirut, Baghdad, Jeddah, Ankara, Jerusalem, and Washington, DC. Mr. Draper was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: During this period (late 1950s), we sent troops to Lebanon and the British sent troops to Jordan. What caused that?

DRAPER: It was a confluence of events. The Lebanon situation was heading toward a *denouement* and Chamoun, the Lebanese President, wanted help. The British could be counted on to support King Hussein. The Washington perception which was shared in some other capitals was that Hussein would fall momentarily either by coup or other ways. There were plenty of coups plotters that were being uncovered. It was our feeling that we had to do something. Our show of force in Lebanon was just that; a show of force. It was remarkably successful. We have never had anything like that before or since. The troops that came to help Hussein contained the situation in Amman;

he was very close to the end--a misplaced bullet would have ended it all for him. It was a close call. But the show of force by the US military, followed by our quick withdrawal, combined with Eisenhower's 1956 stopping of British, French and Israeli attack to recapture the Suez Canal, made for a positive atmosphere in the Middle East, all things considered. It was an intervention, but of the most benign kind. It was the first time we had landed on a foreign beach with no casualties--Lebanese ice cream vendors meeting out troops. It would not have worked another generation later.

There was of course the question of Arab pride. Fortunately we had Robert Murphy out there as special envoy. He had some experience with Arabs in North Africa. He was able to patch things up in very short notice. Deals were made. It was one more piece of evidence of the essential truth of the Middle East: it is a bazaar. You have to know how to make a deal.

Q: After Baghdad, in 1959, you went to Arabic language training in Beirut. Was this at your request?

DRAPER: Yes. I had shown an interest in long-term Arabic training before. This was one of the reasons I had been assigned to Baghdad--to see whether I could survive in the Middle East. A lot of people changed their minds after serving a tour or two in the Middle East. So when my tour in Baghdad came to an end, I went to Lebanon both for language school and to attend certain classes at the University of Beirut in Arabic culture and history.

Q: Arabists have been the focus of much attention in the American media and other circles. Could you describe your training a little and tell us a little about your colleagues? I am also interested in your attitude toward the Arab world and Israel at the time you went to school--1959-61.

DRAPER: The term "Arabist" is often used in a pejorative sense by Israelis and by journalists of all nationalities. The term implies that students of the Arab world are single dimensional in their views of the Middle East and are automatically hostile to Israel and at the same time automatically sympathetic to all Arab views. Some of the people trained as "Arabists" were if not hostile of Israel, certainly skeptical. There were many that to the end of their careers were always critical of American policy towards Israel. But this point of view was changed radically when people like Roy Atherton, Joe Sisco, Hal Saunders became leaders of the Near East Bureau. They and others just would not tolerate any one sided view of either Israel of the Arab world. They insisted on a balanced position. They actually got rid of people with a one sided point of view. This did not mean that there was not room for sharp debate about Israel or any other state, but one's position had to be defended objectively. Their views created a more balanced policy. So today, I would say that it is not possible to advance in the Middle East Foreign Service ranks without being balanced and objective.

Q: When you entered the Middle East group, were you aware of the importance of American domestic politics in the foreign policy of the area?

DRAPER: Yes, indeed. That is true still today. It is very easy to dismiss some one's views by saying; "Oh, he is an Arabist" or "he is anti-Israeli". That is very unfair, but it does happen. This phenomenon must be watched carefully. Israel has a large constituency, far beyond the Jewish

community, which is all-encompassing. There are some fundamentalist Christian groups which are probably more united and vocal in their support of the concept of Israel than even the Jewish groups.

There is another thing that has changed the views of the Arabists and that was the 1967 war. It was the almost universal view of all who had served in the Middle East that the Arabs had made colossal mistakes and miscalculations and deserved to be beaten by the Israelis. The view that the Arabs had only themselves to blame for their 1967 debacle was very strongly held.

Q: How was the Arab training program?

DRAPER: It was both good and bad. A new director was assigned when I was half way through the course. He changed many of the exercise materials, for the better in my point of view. His changes greatly improved the training.

One of the problems is endemic to all language training. At some time during your training, you reach a certain plateau of competence; getting to the next one is very, very difficult. Beirut, as a locale for studying Arabic, was too competitive; there was more French spoken in Lebanese society than Arabic. English was also widely spoken. So it was not easy to immerse oneself in Arabic. The British tried to get around this problem by setting up their school in a little mountain village where Arabic would presumably be spoken all the time. In fact, over the years, the villagers became almost fluent in English. So Arabic training in Beirut was a problem. But on the whole, the training was good. It could not compare with the discipline exercised by our FSI instructors in Spanish or French training because Arab has more dialects and other vagaries, but the training nevertheless was reasonably good. The studies at The American University were excellent; they gave us a chance to explore other facets besides language. You can go stale just repeating language exercises for eighteen months.

Q: What was your view and that of your fellow students of the Arab world at the turn of decade of the ''60s?

DRAPER: We were seeing the oil revolution which was changing the traditional societies almost overnight. While I was in Beirut, we had opportunities to travel around the area--the travel was subsidized. This gave us an opportunity to broaden our knowledge. I saw the Gulf States for the first time. I saw Kuwait and what was going on with the transformation of a traditional society. There were a number of books being written at the time, tracing the changes in traditional societies in such countries as Turkey. Many of us saw the Arab world as promising ground for evolutionary change--modernization--while maintaining the best of their old traditions. We did of course note the occasional violence in that world. We detected underneath all the rhetoric certain sympathy, support and understanding for the United States. There were people who were very critical of our policies, but their view was not universal. In general we saw the Arab world as a promising environment to work in as Foreign Service officers.

Arabic is useful in something like twenty countries. Its roots are similar to Hebrew's, and Farsi and Turkish are also related, as well as Swahili in Africa. Later on, the Department began to assign some of the Arabic speaking officers to Israel to study Hebrew. David Korn was one of the first of

those officers, and it became a regular practice; not only did the officer's breadth of view get expanded, but it also served in bridging the prejudice against the Arabists that some Israelis seemed to have.

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Q: Then you moved over to become country director from 1976 to 1978. Looking at this list of names I can't think of a more god awful combination, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Talking about moving from the eye of the hurricane right into the hurricane.

DRAPER: The Lebanese were then going on as in the past. Jordan was a bright spot, but we were having our problems with Jordan for they were seeking more arms and more security vis a vis Israel. We were bumping up against the supporters of Israel in that respect. Our relations with Syrian were kind of interesting. This is another place where Henry Kissinger sort promoted a modest aid program. It was quite substantial. We had some interesting people in Washington who were content to go along with it, allotting money to Syria for behaving itself and holding to the withdrawal agreement. The AID people in the woodwork were making sure that no real money was being spent in Syria.

Q: The program was sort of a quid pro quo?

DRAPER: It was a *quid pro quo* for the withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the easing of tensions. This was pre Camp David. We were very interested in maintaining the relationship in preventing another outbreak. And we were kind of hopeful Assad was a pragmatist and that under certain circumstances he would work something out with the Israelis. Of course Syria was vitally concerned with stability in Lebanon. In the summer of 1976 we squared a three way deal with the Christians, the Syrians and ourselves. There was a lot of very interesting things going on and it is still true fifteen years later.

Q: What were our interests in Lebanon?

DRAPER: We had sentimental interests, the University of Beirut, it was a sanctuary for the Palestinians, was flashpoint that could explode between Israel and Syria and others into another major conflict in the Middle East. It was a source of great instability.

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Q: Was there a perception that the Palestinians might dominate the situation?

DRAPER: Oh, yes. By 1976, it was quite clear that the Palestinians had already set up a state-within-a-state. People had predicted this outcome starting in 1970 because as the Jordanians were kicking Palestinians out of their country, the latter had no other place to go but Lebanon. In Syria, they would have remained under tight Syrian control; in Lebanon, the government had been traditionally weak and the army and police forces were ineffective. So they went to Lebanon and by 1976, the Palestinian dominated the total area south of Beirut to the Israeli border.

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Q: What role did Brzezinski play?

DRAPER: The rivalry between Brzezinski and Vance existed but it did not interfere with the orderly conduct of our foreign policy. Differences existed about other issues--Africa, Iran--but on the Middle East, Brzezinski cooperated well with Vance. Of course, we had a President who couldn't go to bed at night unless he had read the latest cables. We also knew that "night reading" and other memoranda would eventually get to the President, even if they might have an accompanying note from Brzezinski. So there were many ways of getting our ideas to Carter's attention. That all changed with Reagan; he didn't want to read that much and therefore got in some cases only papers that the ideologues had approved. If a proposal didn't quite fit a campaign promise, the NSC had no compulsion in just ditching it.

So, as far as the Arab-Israeli issue was concerned, the Vance-Brzezinski rivalry was not a big thing. It did emerge on other issues. Carter himself was closer to Brzezinski than to Vance. Carter felt that Zbigniew was a fascinating personality and that he had a fascinating mind.

During 1978, I became deeply involved in the problems raised by the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. An Israeli bus had been attacked by Palestinian terrorists on a road just north of Tel Aviv. The Israelis, a few days later, moved into southern Lebanon intending to destroy all the Palestinians there. They bombed the hell out of the area. They came up to the Tyre area, close to the Litani River. It was not a very well conducted military exercise. The Israeli tipped their invasion and allowed the Palestinians to retreat to some safety; it was a sloppy exercise in many ways. But it created problems. Previous minor incursions and other incidents had involved Carter personally. In this case, we were afraid that the Israelis would not withdraw and would remain about 20 miles inside Lebanon. That would have raised many difficult questions, including what Syrian reaction might be. One of my major career achievements had been participation in the establishment of UNIFIL (the UN peace keeping force) which had been created primarily at my suggestion, when I was chairing the Task Force on Lebanon. Secretary Vance did not think that the UN would approve it, but after working night and day on it for a few days--on the phone, in New York--putting a couple of UN resolutions together which described the force's mandate, we got them approved. The Soviets might have vetoed them, but they didn't--Vance talked them out of it. Very helpful was the UN Under Secretary for Political Affairs. We were fortunate in getting a Security Council meeting together before the Israeli Foreign Minister was able to reach New York. He was still on route when the Council met; so that the resolutions were all approved before he had an opportunity to interfere--he would probably have objected to them. It was all put together so quickly that there really was no effort by Israel or its supporters to interfere with the process. So we put this UN force together which was designed to take over the territory and stabilize it as the Israelis withdrew from it. We got troops from all sorts of countries--Ireland, Canada, Sweden, Iran, etc--all of which had recognized Israel and Lebanon. The Israelis withdrew very slowly and a lot of pressure had to be applied to them. They would not however move from a very narrow strip north of the Israeli border; they stayed there and build up a local army of Christian Lebanese who became their allies. That strip became almost a permanent irritant in American-Israeli relationships because the Lebanese and Syrians and others were always pressuring us to get these Israeli troops out of the strip, but Israel was not about to do that. To this day, that strip along the

border is maintained. UNIFIL was very useful; it was the first time that we were able to put together a peace-keeping force of that nature that quickly. Despite the heavy criticism that has been levied against it, it has become a stabilizing force.

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Q: What did you do after the peace negotiations?

DRAPER: I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near East Affairs. My bailiwick included Egypt and Israel and all of the front line states--Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya and North Africa. So I was very much a participant in the peace negotiations although I had only *ad hoc* assignments in the process which led to the signing of the treaty in 1979. The treaty itself called for a staged withdrawal over a three year period. So there were many follow-up actions ranging from the move of the airfields, economic and military assistance programs to intelligence cooperation and surveillance. One of the major problems was the military presence in the Sinai. Initially, we wanted a UN presence. There were many contingencies we had to plan for, including the possibility that the USSR would veto a UN presence. So we had to have a back-up plan. This was one of the issues I spend a great deal of time on. It was just exhausting over the years. Over the three year period--by April 1982--we had to ready a naval aerial surveillance and build a multi-national force that is still in the Sinai today. That force includes a contingent of American troops who learn scuba diving quickly, among other things. That was the first American peace keeping force ever deployed in the 20th Century. It had always been the view of the United States since the inception of the UN in 1945 that we and other great powers--the USSR--should not participate in such peace keeping forces. So we had to change rapidly some strongly held views. The Pentagon was cooperative. Our problems was more with international commanders and other potential participants. We wanted as many countries as possible to join the force, but they had to have diplomatic relationships with both Israel and Egypt. We had some great luck and were able to get some outstanding people--the Scandinavian generals. But there were a great host of problems for such forces. What can the host countries put up with in terms of armaments--how do you define "light" weapons? There were many follow up areas in which I was very much involved. I spent considerable time on the aid programs, getting them through Congress without restrictions, making sure that they were equitably provided.

There were many things that entered into the process. For example, in light of the Israel-Egypt peace, we could then consider a number of other initiatives. So we obtained funds for peaceful activities and cooperation. It didn't start out with a boom, but it was very interesting. There were common problems--diseases that infect both countries. There were scientific exchanges that we pushed under our auspices and with some seed money. Scientists and educators from both countries began to meet. It is always easier to do things like that with scientists. We also promoted trade which was a much harder problem. Tourism boomed, particularly from the Israeli side--they went off to Cairo in great numbers. The Egyptians didn't reciprocate in the same way in part because there were some religious problems--the Egyptian Copts promised never to visit Israel unless their claims to their major church in Jerusalem. This was a big problem. Then there was one other problem that kept expanding and we knew it would come to a head in 1982. That had to do with the projected border between Egypt and Israel at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba where there were 700 meters of territory that the Israelis didn't want to cede. They had built a hotel there; one

could see that problem looming. It took years and years to resolve and wasn't settled finally until 1990. It was very tricky.

Marking the boundaries was complex. We had to go back to the Anglo-Egyptian survey records. It was very fascinating.

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Q: Begin didn't endear himself with the Reagan administration?

DRAPER: Reagan was not kind of person who held a grudge. He was surprised and upset by some of Begin's actions, but he tended to be forgiving. Reagan was a very nice man. A lot of things did happen. The Israelis felt that they had the warmest-hearted, most supportive President in American history. They never had any one like Reagan. All American presidents had been friendly toward Israel, but they all didn't come through. Sometimes, when they did come through, it was with heavy conditions--for example, Nixon gave them full support, but made the Israelis pay a price in return. So they felt that the Reagan was very benign and they had very good reason to think so, which lead Israel to make some of the most colossal blunders in its history, including the invasion of Lebanon.

Q: Let me return to the invasion of Lebanon. How did you perceive all those events?

DRAPER: In 1981, we had a crisis when Syrians helicopters attacked Christian position. The Israelis sent some aircraft which shot down a couple of helicopters. That brought on an immediate crisis because the Syrians brought into the Bekaa Valley some anti-aircraft missiles, That was a violation of the so called "Red Line" agreement which was negotiated in 1976 and permitted the Syrians to enter Lebanon, but without their missiles. That in effect allowed Israeli reconnaissance planes to fly over Lebanon without being threatened. But by bringing their missiles into Lebanon, the Syrians had violated the agreement. The Israelis were ready to attack. One of the problems at the time was that some of the Reagan ideologues, such as the lower level NSC man I mentioned earlier, were trying to get over the Vietnam syndrome and were hoping for a situation which would permit the Israeli to bomb Damascus with our assistance. Or they looked for other pretenses equally idiotic. We tried to get some sanity into the process. I am not saying that any of these actions might have happened nor that Haig would have gone along with some of the wild ideas. But there were people that he occasionally listened to and who had some influence here and there in Washington that were just too wild.

Haig brought Phil Habib out of retirement as a Special Emissary. He and I went to the region to diffuse the crisis by trying to get the Syrians to pull back their anti-aircraft missiles or by developing some other kind of acceptable arrangement. But whatever could be done could only be brokered by the United States since the Israelis and Syrians were not talking to each other. This was in the midst of a heavy electoral campaign in Israel. It was a painful period. Phil and I saw early on that we wouldn't get any movement out of the Syrians; so we gradually made an effort to develop a program which would ease some of Israel's legitimate concerns in a pragmatic way. We came up with the idea of reducing the threat to Israel by the Palestinian forces stationed in Lebanon and with Saudi assistance, brought about a *de facto* cease-fire between the PLO and Israel, starting

in July. We were hoping to reinforce this fragile cease-fire with other initiatives later on. We tried that, but were unsuccessful. But that was the first *de facto* agreement between Israel and the PLO; it was the source of great controversy in Israel. Began heard from many critics for seeming to recognize the PLO, but it did buy us about eleven months of relative peace.

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Q: These Habib negotiations lasted how long?

DRAPER: From early 1981--about April-- to July when we achieved the cease-fire. The remainder of 1981 was spent traveling back and forth in the region trying to reach a follow-on agreement. We were trying to sell a plan which called for a pull back of forces from the Israel-Lebanon border--that would have pulled the PLO and other Arab groups out of artillery range of Israel. We had other schemes as well. It became clear when Sharon became Israeli Defense Minister that the Israel would move into Lebanon sooner or later to try to destroy the PLO and to set up a regime to their own liking. That was an absolutely stupid idea and in fact turned out to be one of Israel's biggest mistakes. We could see that outcome developing; Sharon practically told Habib and me at one meeting in December, 1981 what he had hoped to do--he did indicate that he did not yet have full Cabinet approval. So some of us spent between December, 1981 and June, 1982--when the Israeli actually invaded--trying to head off what we perceived to be a catastrophe not only for Israel, but also for the West and the United States. I spent a lot of time briefing Haig and Larry Eagleburger, who was then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Unfortunately, my prognostication were exactly on the mark. The image of American supplied aircraft, munitions, arms crashing down on civilian targets in Lebanon created a horrible uproar in the world and isolated the United States in the Arab world. People like Nick Veliotes, then the Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs, made similar predictions. Our trouble was, and it was the same trouble that we always had, that the administration could not develop the political will to confront Israel and to tell it that it could not invade Lebanon. Haig wrote in his memoirs that he warned the Israeli that they couldn't take any actions unless it was in response to an internationally recognized provocation; what ever the Israelis did would have to be proportionate to the provocation. That statement didn't mean a thing and no one understood it. The historians will have to decide whether the United States gave in effect a green light to Israel; many Israelis think so. The most common view is that when Sharon told Haig what he was going to do, he got the equivalent of a wink of approval. Haig did not: "You can't invade Lebanon" and he didn't wink; he just didn't comment in some cases. He listened to what the Israelis had to say; once the Israeli Chief of Intelligence told Haig that Israel would have to invade if they couldn't get a better control of the situation. At that stage, we should have said: "No, you can not do that". We might have had to get Reagan to get in touch with Begin or take other measures to impress the Israelis that important US interests were at stake and that they just couldn't proceed. But we didn't. The Israelis wanted not only to knock out the Palestinians, and were trying to provoke a little fight with the Syrians, which they managed to do, but they wanted to install a regime in Beirut amenable to the Israelis. That would have changed the whole complexion of the Middle East and just would not have been acceptable or possible. Lebanon was somewhat of an outsider in the Middle East in any case, but most of the countries of the regime wanted to regard it as an Arab country. Lebanon was a case, like Ireland and Cyprus, where religious strife would intensify political differences. It was a very complicated situation which made outcomes very unpredictable. From a professional point of

view, it was very dangerous to have another Arab-Israel confrontation, such as between Syria and Israel, because we had to be concerned with the potential Soviet reaction. In 1967 and 1973, we were very close to an all out confrontation between the US and the USSR over the Middle East, which is what makes the area so dangerous. For all these reasons, we were very leery of any Israeli attack on Lebanon.

Q: When Haig didn't respond as he might have, did anyone suggest to him that he needed to take a stronger position?

DRAPER: Yes, indeed. There were some mild warnings. We wanted Haig and the President to go all out to stop, but the administration was not willing; it did not want a confrontation with Israel having been burned before. They did not want to do what Carter had done--seeming to turn against Israel. As it was, our relations with Israel weren't that good. Israel, in 1982, had attacked the atomic reactor in Baghdad and while many in the administration secretly applauded, we had to go along with a resolution in the UN condemning Israel. Israel had also unilaterally absorbed the Golan Heights, not just occupied them, but had in effect extended its sovereignty. That was very upsetting to us because they had done it without consultation. They had done what Kissinger had asked them not to do--no more surprises. And then there was one surprise after another. The administration was so exasperated that it suspended the so called "Memorandum of Understanding" concerning security affairs that we had signed a few weeks earlier. That was the way we tried to show the Israelis that we were upset. We also held back the delivery of some aircraft that the Israelis had paid for. So at this juncture --1981/82--, our relationships were not outstanding. But the Israelis had the bit in their teeth and they were going to go all out regardless of what the American administration was saying--unfortunately. So we were not able to hold the Israelis back. Many of us were just holding our breaths knowing that the invasion of Lebanon would come sooner or later.

Q: How did the Israeli incursion begin?

DRAPER: It was set off by the attempted assassination of their Ambassador in London--Mr. Argov, who incidentally is still alive, but permanently crippled and hospitalized--terrible tragedy. But that was the excuse. Sharon had been secretly planning for this all along was able to sway the Cabinet and the Prime Minister. It started out for the first couple of days with air attacks on the Palestinians and a few other similar actions. Then it escalated until Israelis moved across the border with men and armor. Even then, they described the offensive as having limited objectives; they called it "Peace for Galilee". The announced intention was to drive the Palestinian forces 40 kilometers. When they had reached that line, they went on to Beirut and surrounded the city. There were intermittent cease-fires all along, but none lasted very long. When the Israelis moved on Beirut, the situation changed. The limited objectives had been superseded. The Israelis surrounded Beirut; it was the first time that an Arab capital was in danger of being conquered by the Israelis--that was a major turning point. We desperately tried to diffuse the situation; we helped to bring about the various cease-fires. The Israelis destroyed with virtually no losses the Syrian anti-aircraft missiles systems in Lebanon. The Israelis shot down something like 90 of Syrians first line aircraft. The Syrians were quite bloodied; they dishonored themselves on the ground. From the military point of view, the Israeli operation was not that impressive. With all the resources that they had, they should have been able to move through a small country like Lebanon much more

quickly. The Palestinian forces largely retreated in fair order without too many casualties to Beirut where they could hide in the warrens of the city and where they could defy the Israelis.

Q: As this invasion proceeded, what was the United States doing? What was the Pentagon saying?

DRAPER: The Pentagon was not dispensing any advice; it was basically describing what was going on militarily. The Israelis moved relatively slowly up the coast. What the world did see was vast bombing of essentially civilian areas. It was well covered by the media and TV particularly. The media fanned out over Sidon and Beirut and saw fires from bombs and other destruction; what it saw was a significant military power being applied to a small country that was basically defensive. Women and children were in the camera's eyes to the great embarrassment of Israel. A lot of the destruction was caused by American-made aircraft dropping American-made bombs. Since the US was seen as such a close associate of Israel, we were blamed not only in the Middle East, but throughout the world, for allegedly having given the "green light". That happened even in the United States. In fact, our laws were being violated because the arms and munitions that we sold can not be used except for defensive purposes. They can not be used to subdue other countries. We had all sorts of restrictions on our arms sales and particularly with the Israel. For example, countries that resold any equipment that they had bought from us many years earlier would have been in violation of our laws. In all cases, we had many rules concerning the use of weapons of terror, like cluster bombs, which clearly barred their use unless the purchasing country had been attacked by another power. The Israelis used them in their offensive operations in Lebanon, clearly in violation of United States laws.

Q: Did we feel that we couldn't do anything about it because the administration felt that the Jewish lobby would not support any US action or demarche?

DRAPER: That was one major reason. For example, under US law, we could have immediately suspended all military, all economic assistance to Israel, for example. But of course we couldn't do that for domestic political reasons. I was overseas with Habib at the time and I don't know where in Washington the decision not to penalize Israel was made. It was not a surprise; it was regrettable. Realistically, it was obvious that we would not go all out to boycott Israel. It was also a fact that Israel had occupied half of Lebanon. We had to make the best of a bad situation and preserve what American interests we could. It could have been quite possible that fanatics might attack American Embassies and businesses; we just had to do something. So we moved from trying to get a temporary cease-fire to a longer range solution. The only was to do that was to get the Israelis out of Lebanon. We immediately looked at the idea of getting the Syrians and the Palestinians fighters out of Beirut and perhaps even out of Lebanon. Ultimately we worked something out.

Q: Where were you physically during this period?

DRAPER: The night that Argov was killed a task force under my chairmanship was established in Washington. Habib was on his way to join the President in Europe; he was planning another mission to the Middle East and went to Europe to consult with Reagan and Haig. From there, he did go to the Middle East where I joined him a couple of days later. I met him in Damascus, so that we were when the fighting started. During the invasion period, we spent considerable time in Israel and visited Damascus again. Then we took a dangerous trip through the fighting by back roads to

get to Beirut. Phil spent a lot of time in Beirut because he could have secret meetings with the Israelis there. I would occasionally helicopter to Israel to brief the government there. When we got agreement in principle to evacuate the Palestinian fighters, we had to find new homes for them. We flew to Amman, even to London to meet King Hussein, to see whether some could be resettled in Jordan. We also flew to Cairo and then Damascus again. It was a shuttle that never stopped--it went on 24 hours per day week after week. Finally, in August, the evacuation started preceded by lot of preparations which of course raised a number of problems that had to be raised at the last minute. We had to--very regrettably because we would have preferred not to--find an international force at the demand of the Lebanese and the Palestinians to protect the latter as they were being evacuated. It was a reasonable request, but the Israelis would not accept a UN force which was our preference. We already had a UN force in Southern Lebanon, but the Israelis were adamantly opposed to anything that was connected to the UN. So very, very reluctantly, we put together a multilateral force of Italians, French and Americans. Reagan personally approved this scheme, but both Phil and I were very reluctant to do that, but we saw no other alternative. We still had to get guarantees from the good guys and the bad guys--the Israelis, the Christians, etc--to make sure that the Palestinians' families would be protected. We gave assurances, made all kinds of guarantees in good faith. Unfortunately, many of the assurances were broken later when then newly elected President Gemayel was assassinated and the Israelis moved into Beirut despite their promises. They allowed the Christians to massacre many hundreds of Palestinians in the Shatila and Sabra camps.

Q: Did we believe that the Israelis were implicated in this tragedy?

DRAPER: Of course. One of the items in the subsequent investigation records showed that I personally had been in touch with the Israelis to protest the massacres. When I found out about the events, I dictated a message to Defense Minister Sharon which was given to Israeli intermediaries. I assigned full blame to him for what was happening because he had complete control of the area and could have stopped the massacres if he wished. It was obscene. We did everything we could to stop the Christians; it was a desperate and difficult situation.

We managed to evacuate the Marines and the Italians and the French after seventeen days, which was long enough. We had never contemplated these forces staying more than thirty days. The Palestinian and Syrian fighters had been evacuated and that operation had gone smoothly. The Palestinians and the Lebanese were upset that these troops had left Lebanon, but we had to do it. We certainly didn't want the Marines to stay any longer than was absolutely necessary. At that time, the situation looked pretty good. The Israelis were behaving themselves; the Syrians and Palestinians were quiet; there were very few problems. In fact, the Lebanese army was beginning to take over its own territory. So by the beginning of September, we flew back to Washington to discuss what our next steps might be.

I returned from those Washington consultations and went to Israel first to start a new stage which called for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. I was starting that negotiation between Israel and Lebanon. We arrived in Israel on September 14, when we got the word that the building in which Gemayel was meeting had been blown up. We didn't know until late that night that Gemayel had been killed in the bomb blast. I was awakened at the hotel around 3 or 4 a.m. by people calling from Washington telling me that the Israelis were moving into Beirut--they had only surrounded

before and their move into the city was contrary to all understandings and assurances received. The city was filled with old people, non-fighters, the families of the Palestinians who had been evacuated. So I got in touch with the most senior Israeli I could find--the Deputy Secretary of the Foreign Ministry--and he got in touch with Begin. We had promises that the Israeli troops had not entered the city, but we just occupying the hills surrounding the city. They were occupying checkpoints to keep the various Lebanese factions from fighting each other. I had an appointment to see Begin very early that morning--6:30 or 7 a.m.--; he reiterated some of the same promises that I had gotten a few hours before--that the Israelis were taking only limited steps. In the meantime, Washington had told me that it wanted me to be the official representative at the Gemayel funeral which, according to Lebanese custom, was going to be held that afternoon. I asked the Israelis for a helicopter to get to Lebanon, which they provided. As I stepped off the aircraft at Israeli headquarters in Lebanon, which was in the hills just above Beirut, I saw many signs of fighting--artillery fire, tank fire, small arm fire. I asked to the American who had come to meet my helicopter what was going on only to be told that the Israelis had moved into the city despite what had been said to me only three hours earlier.

Q: Did you feel that the Israelis were trying to deceive you or was the military just proceeding regardless of the civilians?

DRAPER: The whole week showed that the Israelis just couldn't be trusted at that point. Two days later they allowed the Christian militia to enter the Palestinian camps. I don't know for sure that there was a concerted Israeli government decision to take specific actions; they may have just happened, but certainly the Israeli moved beyond the agreed line around Beirut, thereby violating many of their commitments. This fact was accepted by even the strongest pro-Israeli proponents in the administration because within days the Reagan administration had agreed to return the multinational force back into Lebanon. That would not have happened unless we had felt guilty because all our promises and assurances of safety for the Palestinian families had been broken. Our Marines were sent back at that point out of guilt feeling.

Q: This whole episode turned into a real disaster for the United States, didn't it?

DRAPER: It sure did.

Q: How did you get the Palestinians to agree to leave Lebanon?

DRAPER: We worked through intermediaries. We communicated in writing. Our notes were very, very carefully drafted. I wrote 99 percent of them. They are all available in the record. The notes were addressed to Arafat, so that technically you might say that we were in communication. We did get approval in principle to have "proximity talks"--one party in one room and the other in another with an intermediary going back and forth--and perhaps even face-to-face talks. As it turned out, we didn't have to. Of course, there are pros and cons to any method of dialogue. We didn't want to have any closer relationships because we knew that the Israelis would go up the wall. It might even have sabotaged the chances for a cease-fire and withdrawal. There was also the question of security; it would have required us to go into parts of Beirut which were being constantly shelled and bombed. Habib and I would have been tracked and who knows who might have wished to blow up the building we might have been in? So it was very difficult to decide how

to negotiate with the PLO. We were prepared to have "proximity talks", but didn't have to, as I said. We used to joke about it; when we told the Lebanese Prime Minister that we might do this, he agreed and said: " You Americans can go into the dining room, the Palestinians will go into the living room and we Lebanese will go into the bathroom". Despite all the fighting, we did get messages back and forth. There were delays at times; there were no mechanical methods of communications--telephones, telexes, etc. We had to wait for the emissaries to weave their ways through the fighting. It was all very complicated; we had many deals worked out, including a special checkpoint which allowed the emissaries to travel back and forth without being seen by an Israeli soldier. That was known as "Checkpoint Draper" because I had negotiated it between the Lebanese army and police and the Israeli army and intelligence and other factions. We had all kinds of special ways. Sometime, we might be able to get a telephone call through to some people. We had a very active Lebanese intelligence service working with us. The Israelis permitted the telephone lines to remain open so that they could tap them.

We finally got an agreement, but it depended on putting a multinational force into Lebanon for a while and an agreement that all the factions in Lebanon would not attack. I got that from himself--he was the leader of the Christians--. We put it all on paper to the PLO. The evacuation was carried out in safety; it was difficult moment, but no one was hurt. By and large, the process worked.

We were very lucky that the Tunisians agreed to take the PLO. That took a great effort, which we did at long distance. Habib was hoping that the bulk of the Palestinians would go to Egypt, but Mubarak would not agree. He did not want the PLO headquarters in his country. We wanted the Palestinian fighters to go some place where strict control could be exercised over them. Egypt was one of the few places we thought would satisfy that objective. It had a strong army and a good intelligence and police force. But Mubarak was completely unwilling, at least as far as the PLO headquarters was concerned. Jordan would accept only limited numbers; Yemen agreed to take some back, but the whole resettlement process was full of complications. The PLO did not want to go to Syria for obvious reasons--Assad was so angry at Arafat. As it turned out, the Syrians were the most accommodating. For a while, we despaired of finding even a temporary home for these people, but the Syrians accepted quite a few and that eased the problem considerably. The Iraqis were willing to take some Palestinians, but there were other problems. We thought if they went there, it would just create other problems; so we were never serious about that possibility. We were trying to evacuate thousands and thousands of men who were leaving wives and children in Lebanon. The Red Cross was very upset with us for a while because they felt that families should not be separated in evacuations of the kind we were fostering. We gave some thought to moving all the Palestinians out of Lebanon, but that would have meant a difference between 12,000 and probably 140,000. The only comparable transfer was between Greece and Turkey after World War II. One of our original ideas was to move the fighters and their families and others to Northern Lebanon in an unpopulated area in sort of an enclave. The Lebanese would not accept that; they hated the Palestinians. There was a lot of sympathy for the Palestinian political cause, but not for their behavior. The Palestinians were very bad. The Shiites in Southern Lebanon had moved the Palestinians out of their area and had welcomed the Israelis to some extent, which the Israelis ruined, of course, later. The Lebanese hostility toward the Palestinians was such that they wouldn't consider leaving the fighters at least in Lebanon. After going through all the options, we reached the conclusion that we just couldn't send all the Palestinians out; we had to settle for just getting the

fighters evacuated. We settled on that to save Beirut and American prestige; the situation just had to be diffused so that it would be possible for the Israelis to withdraw in good order with their own "face" saved. That was to be the second stage. There was no other choice to what finally happened; we tried to do the maximum, but had to settle for something less. We did the best we could.

Q: During your "shuttle", did you find any division among the Israelis on the Lebanon invasion?

DRAPER: In the first week, there was completely unity across the board, including the opposition parties. That gradually waned as it became quite clear that the operation might not be as moral as originally sold. Three or four weeks after the invasion, an Israeli Colonel, who had been a real hero, resigned making it clear that he could no longer kill women and children in the Beirut area. A lot of under-currents of dissatisfaction developed. You could also detect differences when you observed how their various clandestine services were behaving. They obviously all held different views. Military intelligence was very skeptical about the possibility of setting up a friendly Lebanese government; they were very skeptical of the capacity of the Christian militias. Other elements of the Israeli intelligence community felt differently; there was strong support among some of these organizations for Gemayel and his family and for the Falange. There were others who had differing views on how to handle the occupied zone in South Lebanon and the Shiites which were 80 percent of the population in that part of the country. There were other differences over how to handle the Druze; there was ambivalence about what to do with the territory that the Druze occupied. The Israelis initially disarmed the Druze and then resupplied them later. We saw a lot of funny things happening.

As time passed, the Shiite element in South Lebanon, who had initially welcomed the Israelis, turned against them, partially for economic reasons. The Israelis did not let them harvest their orange crop. That was the end of the farming seasons for them. There were other things that the Israelis barred them from doing. It was stupid, but the policy was fostered by a lot of Israeli merchants who were shipping goods to the Shiites from Israel and didn't want competition for their own wares. There were a lot of reasons; I think there were many Israelis who thought that they could treat South Lebanon just as they treated Gaza and the West Bank. That view was not of course held by all Israelis, but there were many who didn't understand how counter-productive their policies were. When you interfere with the livelihood of already poor people, it is pretty traumatic. This policy gave the Shiite fundamentalist and other fanatics an opportunity to regain power and gradually over a period of months they turned the whole population against the Israelis and made the situation more and more difficult.

Q: When you protested the Sabra and Shatila massacres, did you have instructions?

DRAPER: No. Habib and I, while we were in the region, operated largely without instructions. We were implementing a policy as we went along; the policy was generally to do the best we could. When I returned to the Middle East on September 14, that was the day Gemayel was assassinated. I was in Lebanon on the 15th; on the night of the 16th--approximately--, we saw signs of some Israeli activity, although we weren't sure what was happening; it could have been the Christians moving back into Beirut. But we weren't sure of what was happening for another 24 or 48 hours. Of course, during this time, we were trying to get Israeli assurances and also Christian promises not to enter Beirut. We went to see Gemayel's brother, who later became President, to ask him to

keep his Christian militias out of the city. A lot of this became public later when the Israelis investigated the events of these weeks and punished the people responsible--there were lot of people punished. But we didn't know what was going on at the time, except that we were getting calls from Lebanese people, intelligence services, reporters. We could see through binoculars that there was considerable activity in the city. For example, the Israelis were firing illumination shells near the Palestinian camps. That aroused our suspicion. We discovered later that on that first night they let the Christian militia into the camps.

The Israelis maintained, at least at the time of the massacres, that there were still 3,000 or 4,000 fighters in the area that had to be rooted out. They insisted that they had intelligence information that had led them to that conclusions. I kept asking them for their sources because our checks indicated that there may have been a handful of fighters who had gone underground. There was a handful of former officials who were hiding out--one or two of them we helped to reach Damascus safely. They were the so called "scholars"--people who ran the Palestinian libraries, etc. At most there were a handful of guerrillas; it was certainly not an organized resistance. There were a few armed men in the camps, some of whom our Embassy officials had talked to, but they were all men 60 or 70 years old. They may have had old shotguns, but they were not a threat. Essentially, the camps were disarmed. Sharon, in particular, had pushed Gemayel, when he was still alive, to enter the Palestinian area. We have records of this. Sharon wanted all these people cleaned out. The Israelis and Sharon were partially correct because the Palestinians had stored large amounts of arms and ammunition in underground caves and vaults. The Lebanese forces had volunteered to enter the areas to remove these supplies. They had people who could have done the job over a period of time. There were undeniably great caches of arms and ammunition that had to be removed; that was part of the understandings. The Lebanese government wanted to do it their way; the Israelis wanted the government to invite them to do the job for it. Gemayel's assassination gave the Israelis the excuse to proceed. So the Israelis entered Beirut, breaking their promise, and found gigantic caches of arms and ammunition that had been built up over the years. A lot was small arms. The Israelis got a lot of intelligence by searching the libraries and file rooms and other areas. So from one point of view, one can understand why the Israelis did what they did, but on the other, they did break a government-to-government promise. It was a shock to have the Chief of State of a country tell the emissary of another country, which was its main ally, something that turned out not to be true. That is quite an experience.

Q: Did you think Begin knew what was going to happen?

DRAPER: Someone in that room knew. Whether Begin did, is a mystery. The Israeli investigators of the Sabra-Shatila massacres found contradictory statements including a record made on the Jewish Sabbath which indicated that one Israeli official had called Begin to tell him some of the things that were happening. Begin, in his testimony to the investigators, denied having had such a call. Begin was a very faithful Jew; he would not customarily pick up a telephone on the Sabbath as he was preparing to go to a synagogue. So it is hard to tell where the truth lies.

Let me review the sequence: I had just returned from the United States and was in Israel, when we heard of the explosion which we later found out had killed Gemayel. Then we got the word that the Israelis might be engaged in some military activities; at that stage, we got in touch with Begin and got his promise that the Israelis would just encircle the city. We then left for Beirut to discover that

the Israelis were going beyond encirclement; they were penetrating the city. Two days later, we found the evidence of a huge massacre. I was still in Beirut at that time. With Washington guidance, we then immediately focused getting the Israelis out of Beirut. The condemnation of the massacre was world-wide. We wanted the Israelis out of Beirut, out of Lebanon if possible, but at least as far away from Beirut as possible. We encountered great resistance from the Israelis to move back at all, but the public pressure, both within and outside Israel were so tremendous, that the government had to retreat to some degree. The whole Beirut incident later led to an investigation of the invasion and the massacre and the fall of Sharon. Although we focused on getting the Israelis out of Beirut and the surrounding area, because of our guilt complex, we had to bring back international forces to police the area and lend a presence. That was not something that either Habib or I recommended. Phil was in Washington at the time, so I can't be sure of that, but I doubt that he would have recommended the return of the multinational force. The decision was made unilaterally in Washington on the grounds that the US had to do something.

There has been a distortion in the history of the period. We did not bring the Marines back with a standard "military mission objective". But there was an objective and that was for the Marines to be a presence while the legitimate Lebanese government could re-establish its authority. We didn't have a peace-keeping mission. It was very amorphous. It is a fact that the military didn't have its usual objectives, which are all spelled. If they had that sort of objective, the Marines would not have been placed where they were. They were put in the airport area because the Israelis controlled the airport and they would not pull out unless Americans were assigned there. The Israelis didn't want to be fronting against the French or the Italians for various reasons. None of the multinational forces came as peace-keepers or police; otherwise there would have been thirty of forty thousand more--it would been a major military operation which would have occupied the area. But our objective was political; it was to lean on the legitimate government of Lebanon to assert their own authorities, build their own armies and use their police forces in a constitutional way. It was not an ideal solution by any means.

Q: Where were you during this period?

DRAPER: I went back forth between Lebanon and Israel. We had to get Israeli agreement to evacuate Beirut and other parts of Lebanon. The first multinational force worked in the port areas because that is the way we evacuated the Palestinians. But in this case, we had to get the Israelis out of Beirut and environs--it was bad enough that they were occupying an Arab capital. But we couldn't get anything done unless they at least left the airfield. That was our main logistic area. In addition, the Lebanese wanted the airport back so that they could start civilian traffic again. It was an economic necessity. So the Marines were assigned to the airfield. The Israelis resisted; they wanted to share occupation of the airport because they wanted to keep their liaison aircraft flying and out of the airport. The hero of this episode was Casper Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense. He said that he wouldn't accept that solution. We finally took over the airfield; the Israelis pulled back 100 yards from the airfield--that was all. They gave up every inch grudgingly.

There were other complications. The Marines were constrained by Habib and myself from expanding their perimeters beyond a certain area. We knew that it was unsound from a military point of view, but the Marines wanted to take control of a major highway which paralleled the airfield area. But that was the only highway that could supply Israeli forces in the mountains. So

the Israelis wanted freedom to use the highway. Negotiations were already very difficult; we couldn't ask the Israelis to give up a supply road to some major forces and to have to rely on helicopters and air drops. So we compromised that they could still use the highway for a period of time. That prevented the Marines from taking over the area they wanted; there were occasions when the Israelis would stray into Marine held areas; we had the incident when a Marine lieutenant told an Israeli tank to leave and actually pulled his pistol out. There were a number of small incidents.

Phil and I felt that it would be best if the Marines and the other multinational forces could be withdrawn as soon as possible. What we needed was an excuse; we had hoped that the Lebanese army would take over a key area outside of Beirut from which the Israelis were withdrawing or where there might still have been conflict--that would have been a first. I personally wanted the Lebanese army move into the Ashuf area--mountains east of Beirut were the Druze were in control and where certain Christian militias had moved to in order to compete with the Druids. If the Lebanese could have done that, it would have been an adequate excuse to get the multinational forces out of Lebanon. But that moment never came. For one reason, the Lebanese army was disorganized; many of the soldiers had returned to their families. A new army had to be recruited. With Marines, we brought training teams and were recruiting like mad. Many of the marines that were assigned did a lot of training. We were very excited by how much progress was being made. We were optimistic that the Lebanese army with a few months of training could really do something. Then the traditional rivalries among the Lebanese began to surface; the President, Amin Gemayel, was weak--he couldn't control his own Christian people. Many of the Israeli organizations were working at cross-purposes. Before we knew it, there erupted intense sniping between the Druze and the Christians, between Shiites and others--car bombs were exploding, there was intimidation, etc. So the situation gradually deteriorated.

The Marines had returned in September 1982 and were welcomed for many months. But starting in February or March, 1983, their position also began to deteriorate; they were no longer welcomed with open arms by the population; they were subjected to some minor sniping and there were some security problems. Then there was an car bomb attack on the American Embassy during which 70 people were killed or injured. We reached a withdrawal agreement on May 17, which I signed on behalf of the United States, but we had not yet reached the point at which the Lebanese army, even with the new recruits and the training and the arrival of 36 M-60 American tanks, could take over. There were still too many complications; as a matter of fact the situation was deteriorating.

Habib and I had largely accomplished what we had set out to do. We were both desperately tired; Phil had a medical problem. So our role was taken over by Bud McFarlane, the former National Security Adviser. He and his team went to the Middle East; the situation was rapidly deteriorating and fighting began between the Lebanese army and the Druze and the Ashuf area that I mentioned earlier. Despite the advice of the local Marine commander, we were sucked into the fighting; we brought in battleships and attacked Syrian anti-aircraft batteries. At a certain point, the Lebanese and various factions looked at what was happening and noticed that the United States had come in on one side or another. I must say--strongly--that a few weeks after we had left the area, we did appear to take sides; that was something that Phil and I and others had violently opposed. It was a terrible policy. The appearance of the United States taking sides in an what was essentially a civil war led ultimately to the attack on the Marines.

Q: I can't imagine a more difficult task than having to deal with hard nosed Marine officers and hard nosed Israeli government which was being very difficult in any case. And you were an official of the State Department which has the reputation of being conservative and not understanding. What kind of problems did that create?

DRAPER: None with the American military. They were absolutely terrific. They did an outstanding job and we were highly complimentary. Some of the decisions that were made had nothing to do with the politics of the Lebanon situation. I came from a military family and I must say that I thought that who ever decided to put all of our Marines in barracks in the Beirut area should have been investigated and court-martialed. There was a reason for doing it; the helicopters which were shuttling the Marines from Beirut to the aircraft carriers and back were falling apart. It was dangerous to fly over the ocean in those transports. So placing the Marines ashore was almost a necessity, but to put them in barracks, which was blown up, may not have been the wisest decision. That was a military decision which had nothing to do with the local political situation. Reagan vetoed the idea of an investigation or a court-martial, which could have cleared things up a little bit; so it turned into something else. The attack on the barracks was considered a military disaster because the American public largely regarded our presence in Lebanon as a peace-keeping military function. And it was not that; it was a political operation with the military being one of the instruments that were used. We really didn't want the military presence, as I mentioned earlier.

Besides the local complication, back in Washington there were people in the Pentagon and in the White House and other places that were fighting over the idea of bringing massive American military forces to Lebanon and in effect take over the areas of that country as the Israelis and Syrians withdrew. They wanted to take over on a grand scale. No one could reach a decision on this proposal, but I certainly had no enthusiasm for it and neither did Habib nor the military assigned to my staff at the time. But there were some ambitious people in Washington and as Geoffrey Kemp, who was the NSC staffer working on the Middle East later said, no one could make up their mind. It turned out that there were some NSC people, including Kemp, some Pentagon people and those Reaganites who wanted to destroy the "Vietnam syndrome" once and for all, who wanted a more active policy. Opposed to them were people in State Department who really knew Lebanon who were skeptical and then there was Casper Weinberger, who was opposed to any further military involvement. When you lose 300 Marines, it will of course be viewed as a military catastrophe, which was a misguided perception in many ways; it does not tell the whole story. I blame the decision to fire artillery, bring in the battleships and take other military actions which made it appear that we favored the Christian militias, which was not the case and skewed perceptions of our objectives. When that view took shape, we were dead. The bombing of the Marine barracks was just one result of the change in perception of our objectives; other anti-American activities would have occurred--the Lebanese people turned completely against us.

Q: Tell us a little more if you will about the different kinds of UN or multinational peace-keeping forces that you observed.

DRAPER: I was involved directly or indirectly with forces that were marshaled in the 1970s and 80s. The most prominent of these was the 1978 formation of the UN peace-keeping force in South Lebanon known as UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon). Before that, in 1975 after

the second Israeli-Egyptian disengagement agreement, I was on a mission that moved into the Sinai to spot sites for our surveillance force and systems that were to be deployed near the key passes--the Mitla Pass and others--in the central Sinai area. Also in 1981-82, I was deeply involved in forming a multinational force for the Sinai to monitor the final Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. That force had to be formed because we could not put together a UN force as originally anticipated in the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty because of the threat of a veto--by the USSR and others perhaps--in the Security Council. We made a commitment to Israel at the time that in addition to continuing various overhead surveillance of the Sinai--primarily aircraft, but satellites as well--we would also form a ground multinational force. The overhead surveillance required the permission of the Egyptians and Israelis when conducted and the pictures taken where then distributed to both sides so that they could see whether any violations of the truce had taken place. The ground force had to consist of troops whose countries had diplomatic relations with both Egypt and Israel. It was a lot of work putting that together, trying to overcome problems raised by Egypt and primarily Israel. We had to virtually negotiate everything from tent pegs to the caliber of weapons that we could use, the rules of engagement, etc. We found some superb Scandinavian military officers, but we were restricted to a certain extent by the requirement to find countries that maintained diplomatic relationships with both countries.

One aspect that is true of virtually all peace-keeping forces is that since the end of World War II there has been a tacit agreement that the Great Powers would not use their troops as part of UN peace-keeping forces. Nevertheless, beginning in 1948-49 with a variety of supervisory forces in the Arab-Israeli theater, there were some American and Soviet observers attached to UN forces. There was a tradition that an American officer would be the chief-of-staff of the UN forces headquartered in Jerusalem, but would cover Egypt, Syrian and Lebanon. We had other observers--few in numbers--from time to time. The Egyptians were confined primarily to Egypt and Syria and had to be restrained periodically when they tried to extend their areas of operations. But putting together a peace-keeping force as we did in 1978 was very difficult because a lot of potentially eligible countries did not have diplomatic relations with Israel or were considered hostile by Israel. That group included Greece, for example. The caliber of the forces was often a problem, but some did surprisingly well. The Fiji forces for example contributed outstanding troops to UNIFIL which are still there. The Israeli and the Lebanese factions operating in South Lebanon are very respectful of the Fijians who are excellent soldiers who go by the book. The French contributed crack troops which at the beginning improved measurably the caliber of the over-all force. But there were also weaknesses; the Israeli found, for example, that the Irish troops were not always of good caliber. The Israelis, I think, resented the Irish for seeming to enjoy themselves and often challenged them rather than others. We had Iranian troops in 1978, but they had to be withdrawn in 1979 when the Shah's regime began to collapse. But we had considerable success and some tribute has to be paid to countries such as Italy, which had never contributed forces to a UN operation, but which did participate first in the Sinai by sending naval vessels which closed a big gap. You could always depend on some country to help out. The Canadians have always contributed troops, but it is such a small population that it has to rotate its troops through "hot" spots like Cyprus, Africa or the Middle East and that over and over. The Canadians are very useful because often we needed bilingual communications; these are always in English, but if you can have English and French that makes the tactical communications so much better because more people can receive them.

Q: U Thant was berated in 1967 for precipitously pulling UN troops out. Was that justified? What has been or can be done to insure that UN forces are not withdrawn prematurely?

DRAPER: The mandates issues by the UN since 1967 has always taken into account what U Thant had done. At the time, no one could understand why he had taken that action. In fact, Nasser who had called for the removal of the UN forces had assumed that U Thant would resist; he felt that he had made a token gesture that he could use in his propaganda war against Israel; he was astonished as every one else when the UN troops were withdrawn. U Thant justified his action by an over-legalistic interpretation of his mandate.

One of the problems with peace-keeping forces is that not all of the participants fully understand the nature of these forces. They really can not be armed for genuine deterrence. They have to manage peace-keeping--separation of forces--through tact and diplomacy and some military patrolling. But they are always in trouble with the forces that they are separating. Peace-keeping can't be done with true force. The UN troops are always outnumbered and outgunned by the confronting forces. Nowhere was that truer than in Southern Lebanon. Israel unfortunately has been so negative toward UN forces through the years--in part because they have been challenged and embarrassed by UN disclosures. This has led to a certain amount of loss of political support for UN forces. It is doubly ironic that Congress withheld financial support for some peace-keeping operations, which had been formed by the US--for example, the UN force in Southern Lebanon. That was tragic. Congress did that because of the pressure and propaganda put out by the friends of Israel and by Israel itself. That had led to a lot of serious problems. In 1982, for example, the US was compelled to form a multinational force, including US Marines, for Lebanon because the Israel had vetoed our preferred option: a UN peace-keeping force. We then didn't have any choice. If Israel had not been so negative, we might have had a different kind of arrangement. Israel at that time was not only antagonistic to UN forces, but hostile and distrustful. That distrust goes back to the formation of Israel. One of the aspects that is endemic to all UN peace-keeping forces or any mediating force is the tendency of people to favor and be sympathetic to he underdog. In the Israel-Arab confrontation, beginning with the founding of Israel, UN forces on the ground tended to sympathize with the Arabs rather than the Israelis. This feeling grew and grew. In 1948, there was the separation of Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem by the armistice line. The UN supervised the truck supply line to Mount Scopus; it found weapons and radio equipment etc. that was being smuggled. The Israelis viewed that interdiction as a negative, one-sided UN view. There probably were in the UN forces at that time some anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic points of view. After all, there had been UN representatives that had been assassinated or intimidated through the years--Count Bernadotte, for one. So some of the bias was understandable, but it became the basis for Israeli distrust and dislike of the UN. The average Israeli, looking at some of the anti-Israel votes in the UN. General Assembly, might well conclude that 99 percent of the world was against his country. This just reinforces century-long feeling of many Jews that they are a distrusted race, disliked and isolated; it contributes to that feeling of non-acceptance which is a great factor in the Jewish psyche.

Q: In 1984, you left Middle East issues. What did you do next?

DRAPER: I was asked by senior State officials to spend most of 1984 to undertake a series of public addresses, speeches and appearances around the country. So I spent most of 1984 on the

road, with the understanding that I would return to Washington at least once a week. I went to most of the lower 48 States and Alaska; didn't get to Hawaii unfortunately. I propounded and defended American foreign policy in the Middle East. It was well organized; we worked through the chapters of the Council for Foreign Relations and other groups. It was very, very interesting.

Q: What was the thrust of your message and what responses did you elicit?

DRAPER: The death of the 240 plus Marines in late 1983 by a truck bomber was a very traumatic event. At that time, the administration was on the defense on the issue of why the US stayed involved in the Middle East. There were a lot of Americans, who supported the administration otherwise, were upset or puzzled. Part of my mandate was to explain the picture as best we could and to justify the decision to put the Marines in and then to pull them out. It was a painful period. At one point, President Reagan described our involvement in Lebanon as a "vital national interest". It certainly was not "vital". He overstated the case which his speech writers allowed to creep in. When the President calls a situation "vital" one minute and then pulls the Marines out the next, it takes some explaining.

The trips around the United States were very interesting for me because I found out that even in the hinterlands, there are news-hounds and foreign affairs "groupies" and organization which are fascinated by and interested in what is going on in the world around them. In the last couple of decades, cable television has reached these areas, even though it has not yet arrived in all parts of Washington, DC The *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* can be bought in the newsstand in every little hamlet in all parts of the US People are far better informed than they were thirty years ago and consequently far more interested. I remember that in a community in Idaho I met people in their Foreign Affairs Council meeting who were leading demonstrations against transport of nuclear weapons and the deployment of ATLAS or MINUTEMAN missile squadron to their area. So I was involved in a major public affairs exercise along with other people. It was the biggest one-man show that the Department's Public Affairs Bureau had ever attempted since Vietnam.

Q: Were you followed by speakers who took the opposite point of view and that you were therefore caught over and over again in the same kind of debate?

DRAPER: No. At that time, there were people who were actually affected by the so-called "Vietnam syndrome". They were afraid that we would get caught in another series of quagmires and wanted the US to stay aloof as much as possible. But the Middle East was far different from other American interventions. Most people recognized why the Middle East was important. The memories of the oil embargoes were still very fresh. Terrorism had struck a cord in the American psyche. The Palestinians had been making a better case for their cause. So there was great interest in the Middle East with many differing opinions. There was an obvious yearning for greater clarity in the Reagan administration's policy; that came through in many ways. There was also a strong predisposition to support Reagan.

This was the time when the US recovery from a recession was very strong. You could almost see the attitudinal changes taking place right before your eyes. Very interesting.

Q: After that public affairs assignment, what did you do?

DRAPER: I worked with the Board of Examiners for about nine months. But even during this period, the Public Affairs people would call me for some special projects; I did some special projects for other areas of the Department as well.

Q: What did you think of the recruitment process?

DRAPER: There are a lot of problems with it. We were getting a very high caliber officer into the ranks, both male and female, but we still are short of minority candidates if we are to make the Foreign Service more representative. We made some changes in the process. Recruitment has always been one the Department's weakest areas. Other agencies fan out and set up networks of college professors; for some reasons, the Department has never done it effectively. It has never spent money on advertising; people have not gone to campuses and spent days, not hours, talking to the kinds of candidates the Foreign Service needed. Some of the recruitment material would have been satisfactory for an early 20th Century organization, but it was not adequate in the real world. The Department does not get the results it wants. It always gets the cream of the crop of law schools or the Ivy League schools or the Dukes, UCLAs or Stanfords of this world; it does very well on the East and West Coasts in some of the older and well-endowed institutions because students there know how to network--they know what is going on. But when the Department sends brochures and announcements to places like Utah, Georgia--which are perfectly respectable universities--but their bulletin boards are smothered with announcements from dozens of other institutions. The Department should emulate what CIA and other institutions do and that is cultivate a network of professors and mentors on campuses. That takes time and money; it takes follow-up. I had a fellow examiner who spent a lot of time with successful candidates, following up after the examination, to keep them from getting discouraged. The recruitment process is weak, but there are other real problems. The time between the test and appointment into the Foreign Service sometimes is two or more years. People get discouraged. Also the character of the potential officers is changing; the average young person today in his or her ‘20s is thinking of a three career life. One with the government, then in private enterprise and then something else. That is not unusual. They will not give you that long thirty year commitment; they are more like the military and its "twenty-year" men. There are people of course who will make that long range commitment, but they are not as predominant as they were two generations ago. So there are a lot of weaknesses in the system; the caliber of some of the Department's examiners is not as high as it should be. Some of them have not themselves gone through the entrance examination; that is disappointing. Some of them are very conservative people who have long ingrained prejudices which come out in various ways. Oddly enough, I found that women examiners are a lot tougher on female candidates than their male counterparts.

Some of the examiners the Department has today, 1991, have never gone through the tough examination process that the candidates have experienced. These examiners were transferred in and became Foreign Service officers when they were 35 or 40. Director Generals, like George Vest and Roy Atherton, felt that only the best possible officers be assigned to the Board of Examiners. I must say that the Department has greatly improved in assigning younger officers of middle class ranks and getting greater minority representation; on the whole that has been pretty good. The inclusion of USIA officers has been, on the whole, very positive. But there are a lot of problems,

some institutional, including the question that the written test has not produced as many successful female candidates as statistically there should be. Even worst results are obtained in the case of minorities. The Department has, in response to class action suits by women and court directives, has tilted the screening mechanism to insure that women and minorities have their scores on the written exam adjusted so that the passing levels have a similar relationship to the total applicants as exists for white males. This is not written of the other parts of the examination--the orals, etc. Of course, this is a form of reverse discrimination. In fact, it is very hard to understand why women do not do as well as men in the written exam. Some of us have concluded from the statistics that it may be the result of the university subjects in which they major at the undergraduate level, but after graduate school, males and females have comparable academic credentials and they score about the same in the written exam. It is something about the undergraduate level education that creates a discrepancy.

As far as minorities are concerned, the Department is making some improvements--we have more role models in some cases and the Department is doing relatively well with black women. But it is woefully poor with black males, Asiatics in general and American Indians; Hispanics do a lot better than these latter groups. There is a feeling that if there were a greater number of minority applicants there would be statistically better results. The written test is the big barrier. Minorities and women, the so-called "disadvantaged groups", do relatively well on the oral exam. Some of us have toyed with the idea of eliminating the written examination altogether; all written examinations are under threat and are being questioned. That is not simply because they seem to ethnically and culturally biased, but because they are not working. If you have to tilt a test, perhaps unfairly, it is hardly worth giving; it may be better to get rid of it and find some other kind of screening mechanism. But other methods are expensive. The test has the advantage of ease of administration and monitoring and of being relatively inexpensive. Top flight American private enterprise organizations use other methods which are far more intense, including personal interviews by top people in the company. They develop a core of elites through this intense examination process which parallels the department in some respect, but is far faster and much more personal. The Department's examination process is still highly impersonal partly by design. It is very important that examiners not know whom they are going to see; that is considered important. That means that a second set of examiners have to look at the full record later and check police and security records, evaluations, etc. before the final decision is made. All the parts of the process are the result of compromises, but the present initial oral examination is about as objective as can be made. The time between passage of the examination and the appointment must be shortened to six or seven months as compared to the present two years. That requires that the written test be followed by an oral examination on a separate day. On that day, however, the successful candidates after the oral are also interviewed by a member of the Board of Examiners in a personal interview. The Department will also require that all the candidates do all of the paper work in advance as much as possible so that no time is lost in initiating security clearances. There is a lot of documentation required, including and autobiographical statement. But you win a little and lose a little; the Department can start the security processing quicker this way, but it has also found that minorities do not complete the paper work as others, so that some candidates are lost that way.

Q: After your tour with the Board of Examiners, you were assigned to Jerusalem as Consul General from 1986 to 1988. Could you explain the uniqueness of our representation in Jerusalem and what you responsibilities were?

DRAPER: Jerusalem in unusual in many different ways. From the American diplomatic aspect, it is unique because the US has never recognized the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. We have always maintained, going back to 1948, that its final status should be decided within the context of a peace treaty. Consequently, we have a mission in Jerusalem which is not subordinate to our Embassy in Tel Aviv and which is only nominally recognized by the Israeli. There is no real parallel except maybe for Honk Kong which reports directly back to Washington rather than London or Beijing. The Mission in Jerusalem reports directly to Washington, although in the real world. any Consul General would be stupid to ignore the American Ambassador in Tel Aviv. There has to be close coordination. This scheme of representation gives the United States considerable leeway in that the Consul General has relationships of sorts with the Israeli authorities--very tenuous with the Defense Ministry--but satisfactory with the Foreign Ministry and others. At the same time, the people in the occupied territories see the C.G. staff as officials they can talk to and who might be potential intermediaries, as protectors, as people who follow human rights policies. There are many American citizens in the West Bank and Gaza; they see the American passport as an entry into a better life. Our consular staff is overwhelmed all the time by the Palestinians seeing entry into the United States to work, to study--there are an enormous number of students who apply for study visas. Then there are a vast number of Israelis who want to visit the United States; there is a very sizeable group of ultra-religious, ultra-conservatives Jews who came originally from Eastern United States--Brooklyn, New Jersey, etc--who settled in Jerusalem, but maintain their American citizenship; some of them at least do not recognize the secular State of Israel and do not want to acknowledge its existence by becoming one of its citizens. There is a growing population in Israel and in Jerusalem so that you can see on any given day in the consular section a handful of American tourists in polyester and shorts and a vast number of Palestinians dressed in everything from business suits to tribal costumes and Israelis wearing their traditional costumes--fur hats, etc--with full beards with lots of children. It is tough duty; we reject many Palestinian visa applications if we suspect that the visitors might become permanent residents in the US It is also a painful process for Israelis who are accustomed, after having spent two or three years in the army, to travel around the world for a year before they return to their jobs or schools; we have to turn down some applicants who are suspected of seeking an excuse to go to the United States to get their "green card" or otherwise stay in the US beyond the visa time limitation. We have to observe our laws and consular regulations. This leads to considerable friction and a lot of pressure on the part of powerful people--politicians, educators, etc. It is a human problem.

While I was in Jerusalem, I spent vast energies in promoting more contacts between Israelis and Arabs, particularly those who were politically acute who had been unwilling to talk to each other over the years. I held a number of quasi-secret meetings--lunch or dinners at my house, where people could come inconspicuously to meet others. One of the big problems is that so many Israelis and Arabs have never had such things as a sensible conversation with each other. There was always a great divide. When Israel first occupied the territories in 1967, the Israelis walked and marched and were bussed through the territories, but gradually, as the hostilities of the Arab population increased, fewer and fewer Israelis visited the territories. In 1986, when I arrived, I

found that in fact the "Green Line" had been reestablished. Of course a lot of people still went into Israel and the territories, but it was very common to find Israelis who had never talked to an Arab in their lives and vice-versa. So I was trying to introduce and encourage many of the Palestinian nationalists to meet with certain Israelis, and not just the peaceniks. I encouraged the Palestinian militant to talk to the Israeli militants at my house or in other places. My success was uneven, to put it mildly, but at least there was a process. I made it a habit that all my social functions at my house would have a mixed Arab-Israeli guest list as much as possible, trying to find a concept that might be unifying. I remember we had an American ballet company, we had guest conductors and sometimes we could get Israelis and Arabs together in that kind of setting which was non-political and non-threatening. We couldn't do it in other ways. The Fourth of July party always had a mixed group from all sectors. Some people refused to come because they didn't want to talk to other groups. Particularly in 1986, we had a lot of interesting episodes. I spent a lot of time on this "exchange" program and there were some fruitful outcomes. It didn't always work well; in one case, two strong Palestinian Liberation Organization supporters carried on talks with a junior member of the Beirut branch of the Likud coalition, which was in power at the time. They came out with a manifesto of sorts which was quite moderate and pragmatic. Likud conservatives spanked the young politician for having that conversation, not to mention co-authoring a manifesto with Arabs. Then there were other such events.

There were other problems. The Palestinians can be pretty exasperating. As Abba Eban, the former Israeli Foreign Minister said one time, the Palestinians never lose an opportunity to lose an opportunity. It was very much rolling half up the hill, only to roll all the way to the bottom. Even my most pragmatic friends with whom I discussed the problem as recently as this past February knew that the Palestinian support of the Iraqis after their invasion of Kuwait, but the Palestinian "main-stream" including the most conservative and the most pragmatic, tended to see Saddam Hussein in a light which differed from that of the rest of the world. They are so frustrated.

We did some things for them in the early ‘80s. We had a modest economic assistance program which was doing a lot of good work, including then establishment of an Arab owned bank in the territories, which was an essential ingredient. Few Americans, even including officials, recognize the economic death-grip around the territories, particularly in Gaza. These people are doubly frustrated because they can't sell what they produce and they can't farm what they want. These restriction exists sometimes for practical reasons, such as the shortage of water, but people who grow vegetables, fruits, melons, nuts on the West Bank could have found a market in Jordan and in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but were constrained not only by Israeli regulations, but also by Arab indifference and Arab road blocks or those set up by their competitors. A West Bank truck, loaded with fresh grapes, would cross, after paying an enormous fee to the Israelis, the River Jordan to Amman only to find that the farmers and businessmen there would see to it that the truck stayed in customs for three or four days until the fruit had rotted. It was a continuous series of frustrations for the Palestinians in the territories. The Israelis would not let them compete and in fact gained considerable revenue from the taxes on the trade that the Palestinians conducted. But it wax a "Catch 22" arrangement and some of our assistance programs were designed to overcome this. We introduced new animal husbandry techniques, better irrigation facilities, better sanitation, better medical facilities, etc. But the day to day life of people who were subjected to these constant economic and social frustrations and who had to deal with the Israeli bureaucracy which is unbelievable was just a major burden.

RICHARD B. PARKER
Ambassador
Lebanon (1977-1978)

Ambassador Richard B. Parker was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree in engineering from Kansas State University. Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 1949, he served in the U.S. Army as an infantry officer. Ambassador Parker's career included positions in Australia, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and ambassadorships to Algeria, Lebanon, and Morocco. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

PARKER: Roy told me that my name was among those who had been put forward to the White House as a candidate for Beirut. I said I didn't want to go to Beirut and get shot at. I had had enough danger in my life. He said he didn't enjoy recommending friends to go to a place like that, but he thought with the Syrians there, it would be secure.

I went off, and I forgot about this. I was in Houston. I was in the office of a senior executive of a company that has since gone broke -- the name of which I cannot remember. Sitting in his richly furnished office. The telephone rang, and it was Roy Atherton, and he said that, "The President had decided to send you to Beirut as his first ambassador."

And I said, "Oh, shit." That's just how I felt. Well, I continued the trip and then came back and had a very suspenseful wait for the Senate to have their confirmation hearings because the Department wanted me to get out there before the Secretary got there. The Secretary was arriving on something like the seventeenth of February. Secretary Vance. As it happened, we had time. We originally thought we were going to have this hearing the second week in January. We had prepared for it for a given day, for a Thursday. We were going to go have lunch afterwards with Dayton Mak in Georgetown. Lunch or dinner, I can't remember which. And then take the plane to Algiers.

Q: *To Beirut.*

PARKER: No, I had to go to Algiers to say good-bye and pack and then go on to Beirut. Well, that hearing was never held that day and so instead of staying for lunch or dinner or whatever it was, we had to move in with the Mak's for a week, because we had already moved out of Columbia Plaza and couldn't get back in. The poor Mak's had to put us up for an extra week before we finally got off.

I had three days in Algiers to say good-bye. I didn't have time to get sworn in Washington. I got sworn in by our consular officer, Jim Ledesma, in the lobby of the embassy in Algiers. Then I went off to Beirut.

I arrived there the thirteenth. I presented my credentials on the fourteenth. The Secretary arrived on

the fifteenth or seventeenth -- I forget which.

Q: *What was the Secretary doing on that trip?*

PARKER: This was his first visit to the area. The area was obviously one of high priority, and he wanted to come out and see what was going on and get a feel for the situation. The administration was considering -- I'm not sure whether they were considering at that point -- but they knew about this study done by the Brookings Institution on a comprehensive Arab- Israel settlement. They were very interested in trying to do something about it. In contrast to the Ford Administration which had concentrated on this little step-by-step approach.

Vance came out with a large entourage and made a quick trip. Had lunch with the president. Came in the morning, left that evening. Didn't spend the night. Everybody was scared that, you know, somebody was going to take a shot at him. I must say Beirut in these days was a very hairy place.

Very heavy security precautions. I had a minimum team when we moved off. When my wife and I and our guards went some place visiting, there were thirteen people in three cars. People carrying Uzis and sawed-off shotguns and big shotguns and any weapon you can think of. Eventually, I had three American guards as well as my Lebanese guards.

We lived, first of all, in an apartment down in town near the embassy. We had the Marines in there. The Marines were under instructions to be with us all the time. About the only place we could be without the Marines standing around watching us was in the bathroom or the bedroom. In fact, they were in the bedroom next to ours sleeping there. Absolutely no privacy.

That was relaxed a little bit after a while. We moved up to the residence on the hill, which is at Yarze which is still being occupied by the ambassador although it has been hit a number of times by shells.

We moved out in the late summer of 1978 after a very difficult night in which one of our American bodyguards almost got killed by a shot outside our bedroom door. One of the Marines was out in the garden, and a mortar shell landed there and knocked him down. He was in a state of shock all evening. He came bursting into our bedroom and ordered my wife and me to get up and get out and to put on our gas masks and go downstairs to the wine cellar. We didn't have a shelter. But on the first floor, there was one room with no windows where we kept wine and food. I told him to take it easy and at least let me get my clothes on, which I did.

The next morning, the security officer came and said, "You know, you really can't stay up here. It's not fair to your staff to have them running back and forth between town and here through all these dangers with messages and so forth."

I said, "You are right." We moved down into an apartment in the embassy and stayed there until we left.

It was a very exciting post. Everything since Beirut has been anti-climax.

Q: *Well, could you describe the political situation? We are talking about when --*

PARKER: 1977. February of 1977.

Q: *February of 1977. What was the political situation in Lebanon at that time?*

PARKER: Well, there was the so-called Arab deterrent force which was largely Syrian. About thirty- thousand troops which were, in effect, in occupation of the country in parts of it, not all of it, maintaining order. You had the PLO enclave.

Q: *PLO is the --*

PARKER: Palestine Liberation Organization enclave in the south. They controlled south Lebanon practically up to the Israeli border.

You had a number of militias heavily armed who had been involved in the fighting in '75 and '76 which had been very heavy at times. They had equipment up to and including heavy artillery and tanks. You had, first of all, what became the Lebanese forces, the Maronite, the Christian force. Perhaps eight or ten-thousand men armed with weapons supplied by various places including the Israelis. The Israelis had had a liaison arrangement with these people for almost thirty years at that point. That was the only Christian militia.

On the Muslim side, you had Kamal Jumblatt, the leader of the Druze, who was assassinated shortly after I arrived and succeeded by his son, Walid. That's Jumblatt, J-U-M-B-L-A-T-T, Kamal, K-A-M-A-L, and Walid, W-A-L-I-D. All right. Kamal Jumblatt led this force of Druze warriors that owed feudal loyalty to him. I don't know, there were somewhere between five and ten-thousand men. They were mostly up in the Shuf mountains.

In the town of Beirut, you had a Muslim militia. They called them murabitun which was very small and ill-formed in West Beirut. You had very heavy Palestine Liberation forces of various factions including Saiqa, S-A-I-Q-A, which was controlled by the Syrians. And what we called El Fatah. The real name was Fath, F-A-T-H, but everybody spells it F-A-T-A-H. Saiqa and Fatah were the two strongest Palestinian forces.

The Shia at that point had a very small, embryonic militia which was not of any importance on the local scene.

It was a terrifying site to drive around Beirut. You would see these young, fourteen, fifteen-year-old boys with AK- 47s and bandoleers of ammunition around their shoulders, obviously ready to shoot at anybody.

The Lebanese have always liked to shoot. You see sometimes in the television news a fighter standing out in the street, and he's got this submachine gun and just is pointing it off in the general direction of somebody and pulling the trigger. He's not aiming at anyone. They were highly inaccurate. You would see the side of a building that had been largely destroyed, pockmarked with holes coming from automatic weapons, a machine gun of some sort. Just hundreds and hundreds of

them across the wall, nothing apparently going through the window. Of course, it wouldn't leave any mark if it had. Wildly inaccurate shooting.

Q: *You know, just a practical question. Ammunition is expensive. It's very expensive.*

PARKER: Yes.

Q: *Where does this come from?*

PARKER: These people were all subsidized. Subsidized by the Israelis, by wealthy American Maronites, by wealthy Muslims, by the PLO, by the Iraqis, by the Syrians, by the Saudis, by the Kuwaitis. I don't know. This was an industry, being a fighter. I mean, one of the principal sources of employment. People got paid a pretty good wage by Lebanese standards for this. I forget what it was, but it was quite respectable. You could support a family on this. The danger was not all that great. Most of the casualties were civilians. The military casualties were very limited.

Q: *What was causing this? I hesitate to open this particular can of worms, but I think you have to explain what were some of the forces that were going on with them.*

PARKER: Well, that's a question of discussing the political dynamics of Lebanon which is something that really needs a whole interview. But very briefly, Lebanon existed under a very delicate balance which was based on a gentlemen's agreement which itself was based on a legal fiction that the Christians were a majority. All jobs and influence were distributed on the basis what was called the dosage. Dosage is spelled D-O-S-A-G-E, it's a French term meaning the dose. That is, what was the percentage of people of a given sect in the population. The legal fiction was that everything should be divided on the basis of six Christians to five Muslims. The parliament, for instance, always has to be a multiple of nine. I'm sorry, of eleven. You have to have six Christian seats and five Muslim seats.

PARKER: There are sixteen recognized sects, Christian and Muslim. Each sect, down to and including the Protestants, is entitled to some representation in parliament and in jobs throughout the bureaucracy, which are handed out on the basis of this sectarian affiliation. Confessionalisme is the French word for it.

The President of the Republic is always Maronite. The Speaker of the House, which would be the second ranking position in terms of protocol, is a Shia, S-H-I-A or S-H-I-I. And the Prime Minister is Sunni, S-U-N-N-I, Muslim. Somebody who by virtue of his position is behind the president in power. The president has extraordinary powers including the ability to legislate by decree. He can decree a law. And if the parliament doesn't overturn it within a fixed period -- I think it's sixty days -- it becomes law. What Ronny Reagan couldn't have done with that.

This system worked pretty well. It was held together by the tension between these sects which prevented any one of them from really dominating the others. I mean, the Maronites were first. They had more power than the others, but it wasn't all that much more. But they were balanced off by the other sects in any event. That's sects, S-E-C-T-S, not S-E-X. They governed by what I called Draconian gimmick. You didn't pass legislation or pass laws to do directly what you wanted. You

imposed some sort of a penalty.

I remember once going to the president with a delegation from the World Bank, and we had a proposal for some low cost housing which was very much needed in Beirut. The American government and the World Bank were prepared to support it. And President Sarkis, S-A-R-K-I-S, said he didn't want to have anything to do with it. He wasn't going to make a decision as to who was going to get these houses. However he made the decision, it would be challenged, and people would fight about it.

It was much better just to let the neutral forces of the market determine who was going to get what house. What you do is you set interest rates. You made money available in the form of funds for loans. You gave cheap loans, and you let people come and borrow money. Those who could would, and they would put up houses, and if they weren't going to live in it themselves, they would rent it to somebody else who could afford it. This would all work out in the end. Much more satisfactory than if the government tried to say, "Okay, everybody with income of less than five-thousand pounds is going to be eligible for one of these houses, and we are going to start doing this on an alphabetical basis," or whatever. However they chose to do it, they would be in trouble. So they always looked for some neutral way to do this.

When they wanted to, as opposed to giving out rewards, when they wanted to impose penalties, they would have to have some way that was non-political of doing this. Everybody was related to a member of parliament. Any attempt to give anybody a ticket was always sort of futile because nobody would pay it.

Q: *This is a traffic ticket.*

PARKER: A traffic ticket. So what they did was you have the system that we have here in Washington, D.C. at the moment. The policeman would note down your number, and he wouldn't even bother to give you a piece of paper. He would just file this away. At the end of the day, he would say, "Well, this car, this number, went through a red light at one- fifteen p.m.," and that would be put against your plate. And when it came time to renew that plate, you couldn't renew it unless you paid off these fines.

Same thing with taxes. No tax collector would go out. They wouldn't take you to court about it, but you would find that if you hadn't paid your taxes -- and everybody evaded taxes to the maximum possible extent -- that if you hadn't paid your taxes and you wanted a license to import something, you couldn't get it until you paid off the tax bill.

A system which was full of holes. In many respects, worked very badly, and in other respects, worked very well. It was a crazy sort of place in which you could do anything. Buy anything. Any kind of sex you wanted, any kind of drug, any kind of food, any kind of car, any kind of entertainment, any kind of house. You could live better in Beirut than you could any place in the world as far as I was concerned. It was really a swinging town. We had been there in the early sixties as I said earlier and enjoyed it greatly.

Well, this wonderful, bizarre mechanism had come apart under the weight of, first of all, the

Palestinian armed presence. When King Hussein finally moved against the PLO in Jordan in 1970 --

Q: *This was Black September.*

PARKER: Black September. Something that Harry Symmes has described in his oral history.

The people moved to Lebanon and set up this state within a state in southern Lebanon which became the nearest thing they had to a homeland. They would attack the Israelis. And the Israelis would come over and bomb the Lebanese. This became an intolerable situation for the Lebanese. The Israelis were trying to force them into doing something about the Palestinians, but they couldn't because the Palestinians were primarily Muslim. This became a matter of religious solidarity between Lebanese Muslims and Palestinians. Lebanese Muslims, in general, supported the Palestinians. The Maronites in particular opposed them. And the army being divided between Christians and Muslims was unreliable. They weren't going to shoot at fellow Muslims. And so the army couldn't be used. The state was unable to cope with this.

This problem was aggravated by the economic and social inequalities that had built up in this country. Particularly between the north and the south. The Shia in the south were neglected and very little was done for them. They were behind everybody else in terms of literacy and education and wealth and property and in any way you want to look at it. Social graces and so forth. But they were the most prolific part of the population, and they were by the mid-1970s, probably the largest Muslim sect in the country. They were crowded into what was called the Belt of Poverty around Beirut. A collection of lower class housing, poor sanitation, and so forth. Sort of amalgamated with these three refugee camps of Tall Za'tar, Sabra and Chatilla, C-H-A-T-I-L-L-A. To western observers, a constant potential source of trouble. They indeed provided a majority of the fighters in the Muslim militias.

Well, this was a very unstable situation. The Syrians had decided -- correctly in my view -- that the only way you were going to bring this situation under control was to disarm the militias. Every family in Lebanon had an automatic weapon. The Syrians were going to go out and collect them. They were going to start with two refugee camps, Sabra and Chatilla, in Beirut which were strongly fortified by the Palestinians.

Q: *This was, we are talking about when?*

PARKER: I am talking about when I arrived in Beirut on the thirteenth of February.

Q: *So, I mean, they hadn't started this yet.*

PARKER: No, they hadn't started yet. They were moving tanks up, and they were going to move, I believe, the next day. The fourteenth or fifteenth I guess it was. Vance was arriving the seventeenth. They were going to move in the camps on the fifteenth, or something like that.

We urged them to delay this for a week because we knew that there would be serious fighting when this happened, and we didn't want it to ruin Vance's visit. We wanted to get him in and out of

Beirut before this happened. So we put pressure on them. The French did. The Lebanese did. The PLO did. They postponed it for a week, and they never did it. They lost momentum, and it never got done. These militias have never been disarmed, and until they are, you will have no peace in Lebanon.

My mission in this place was sort of, you know, nobody ever told me what the hell to do. It was to go out there and be the ambassador.

Q: *This is something that as we have worked on these oral histories, it's a question I ask every ambassador. What were your instructions? And I usually get either a very blank look or say, "Well, you just go out and be an ambassador."*

PARKER: That's right. No, what they said was, "We are behind you all the way. Get out there and see what you can do to bring this place together." I saw my function as helping to bind up the wounds of war. When I arrived, I made a noble statement about the period of reconstruction had arrived now. And conciliation. And it was time for everybody to work together to put Lebanon back on the road.

Well, we worked on this very hard. AID came in and put up some warehouses down in the port to replace those that had been destroyed in the fighting. We got the port operating again.

We were making progress in a lot of fields: Economically, training the army, bringing in military equipment. I could bring in anything I wanted to for the army, anything they could absorb, anything they wanted, I should say. I had sort of carte blanche in terms of requesting support in that respect if in my judgment they could use it. I could not, on the other hand, give one single cartridge to the police because of this terrible State of Siege law coming out of the Yves Montand movie.

Q: *We are referring now to what?*

PARKER: To the State of Siege.

Q: *Well, yes, I know, but just for the record, it was a movie --*

PARKER: It was a movie starring Yves Montand called State of Siege, and it was about Uruguay and the guerrillas in Uruguay.

Q: *The Tupamaros.*

PARKER: The Tupamaros and police torture. This was supposedly taught to these South Americans by AID and CIA. As though we could teach those people anything about torture. There was a great revulsion against our aid to police forces because of this and legislation was passed -- I don't know what it was called, but we all called it the state of siege law which, in effect, prevented us from giving any aid to the police.

Well, the Lebanese internal security forces were police forces. They had two types of police. They had the police who were town police, and they had the gendarmerie who were countryside police.

And the gendarmerie in particular was the principal force for order in that country. Unless you had a gendarme in the village, you would have no control over it. But if you did have a gendarme, you could have a certain degree of order.

Well, we couldn't do anything at all for the gendarmerie, which was too bad, because that was a force that could have done something concrete towards restoring order. And would not have been troubled by the confessional problems, the religious problems that you had in the army because you are talking about much smaller, infinitesimally smaller units. And you have a Muslim gendarme in a Muslim village. And there was no problem. A Christian in a Christian village.

We were making progress, as I said. President Sarkis said on one occasion, "For every two steps forwards, we are making one backwards, but at least we are making that progress." This lasted for about a year.

Q: *Before we move to that, I want to go back right to the beginning. You said that because of Vance's visit, you put pressure on the Syrians --*

PARKER: Yes.

Q: *Not to launch this attack to get the weapons. Now, you said Vance came in. I can understand your position, but do you think this is -- I mean, here we have the Secretary of State who hasn't been to the area comes in essentially for a lunch. Flies out again. We tell the Syrians to stop something which may have actually had a significant affect on it. I mean, were there other factors or was the Vance visit, which sounds like in the greater scale of things, a pretty puny event to stop a major action.*

PARKER: Yes, we would have been better off to postpone the Vance visit. To postpone everything. We didn't realize that the Syrians couldn't postpone it for a week, that they would lose momentum.

Q: *Okay, well it was --*

PARKER: This was a miscalculation.

Q: *I was just going to --*

PARKER: But the Vance visit, the concern was security. Before he arrived, I was getting all sorts of messages sort of saying, "On your head be it if anything happens to Vance." Or, "Do you think the situation is safe for him?"

Q: *Were there pressures on you to get Vance in there? Or did you want to have him come in?*

PARKER: Well, yes, sure I wanted to have him come in. It would be a big boost to me in terms of starting out my tour there and would be very helpful for me and the Secretary to sit down and talk to the president. Sort of establish that I was in good standing in Washington and would give the Secretary a firsthand view of what was going on there which is more much important actually than

my status. I think the educational impact on him was what I would consider the most important. Unfortunately, he didn't see much, and he didn't really get much of an earful or eyeful. He came back once more during my tour for a similar visit with similar results.
Q: *Were we even talking to the Syrians? I mean, were we able to have any influence with the Syrians?*

PARKER: Yes, we had relatively good relations with the Syrians at that point. We had an aid program in Syria. Dick Murphy had access. He was the ambassador in Damascus. He could see senior officials, and they would listen to him. We had tacitly accepted entry into Lebanon in 1976. We had acted, in effect, as intermediaries between them and the Israelis about this move in. Sort of getting Israeli acquiescence. We stood in pretty good odor with them at that point.

Q: *I'm sorry to interrupt. You were back saying that the situation where you were working lasted about a year.*

PARKER: Yes. And then the Maronite militia, the Lebanese Forces which is simply an enlarged Phalanges, P-H-A-L- A-N-G-E-S, which was a neo-fascist organization founded by Pierre Gemayel, G-E-M-A-Y-E-L, the father of the Bashir, B-A-S-H-I-R, and Amin, A-M-I-N, Gemayel, the two successive presidents of Lebanon.

The Lebanese forces were commanded by Bashir Gemayel, who looked like a pussycat, but was a ruthless cutthroat, completely immoral in terms of attaining his political objectives. He was bent on becoming president of Lebanon. He came to see me at my residence in December of '77 and said he was about to move on the presidential palace which was about two-hundred yards down the road from us. And he was going to take over. I told him not to be a damn fool. We weren't going to support that, and neither would anybody else. That this was no time to be engaging in foolishness of this sort. He was very disappointed, and he went away.

Q: *He thought that you would give support to him?*

PARKER: Yes, he had because he had been misled I think by Charles Malik, who had kept coming back here and seeing Vance and other people and going back to Lebanon and saying, "Parker doesn't know what he is talking about. Parker is pro-Syrian -- Vance is with us -- ".

Q: *Charles Malik.*

PARKER: Charles Malik was a former Lebanese Foreign Minister, former permanent representative to the United Nations. Perhaps one of the best known Lebanese statesman, who died fairly recently. A Greek Orthodox from northern Lebanon. A man of great intellect and even greater ego who was, I found, a very destructive influence in Lebanon in the time I was there. Where were we?

Q: *Well, I was asking why Gemayel thought he could move his troops and why we would give him support.*

PARKER: Okay, that's right. A couple months later in February -

Q: *'78.*

PARKER: February of '78. Suddenly, there was a skirmish at the Lebanese military academy which was just over the hill from us on the Damascus Road at a place called Fayadiyah, F-A-Y-A-D-I-Y-A-H. A number of Syrian soldiers, who had maintained a roadblock on the Damascus Road near the school, were shot and killed. The Lebanese then went on a rampage killing Syrians. The Syrians were losing something like three men a day, and they couldn't take that sitting down. They responded by shelling Beirut. Much as they were shelling it a couple weeks ago.

Q: *You are talking about in 1989.*

PARKER: Yes. Shelling indiscriminately. I mean, shelling a particular part, the Christian part of Beirut. In plain daylight. We had a visiting American military team when I had half the senior officers in the Lebanese army up for lunch. The Ministry of Defense was just up the hill from us. They came down the hill for lunch. We all stood out on the terrace of the residence and watched a Syrian rocket battery down at Sinn Al-Fil from the other side of Damascus highway. Sinn Al-Fil, S-I-N-N A-L hyphen F-I-L. We watched this battery constantly firing at Ashrafiyah, the Christian section. These Lebanese officers were besides themselves with frustration because they couldn't stop them.

The Syrians theoretically were under the command of President Sarkis, under the command of the Lebanese. But the Lebanese had no authority over them. They were throwing their weight around, and they showed no sophistication, no discrimination between doing nothing and then shooting everybody in sight. They didn't have any sort of middle ground.

The situation then began going downhill. And it has been going downhill ever since with a few respites of shorter or longer duration.

Q: *One of the questions that I think anybody who looks at Lebanon ask, is this because of the very unique elements within this society that this place has become the closest thing to hell that one can think of. I mean, unrelenting war that has gone on with no solution in sight. Or is it really a tie to the Middle East and the Middle East problem, or is it unique?*

PARKER: Well, it's unique in the sense that the Lebanese have always enjoyed a certain degree of anarchy. Mount Lebanon was a refuge area difficult to get to. The tribes that sought refuge up there were able to maintain a degree of independence that other people in the Middle East were not. The exception to that is the Kurds. To a certain extent, the Armenians. Kurds and the Lebanese -- the mountain people were able -- like mountaineers in most places -- because of the terrain were hard to get at; it's fairly easy for them to escape from a pursuer -- there is a long tradition of mountaineering independence. And these people who are fighting today are mountaineers who have come down from the hills, and they are living on the plain now, but they think they are a bunch of mountain boys.

It is complicated by the fact that, as I've said earlier, nobody takes Lebanon seriously. Just about

everybody has dabbled in Lebanese politics to a greater or lesser extent including ourselves, the Israelis, the Soviets, the British, the French, the Saudis, the Turks, the Iraqis. Everybody who has any interest in that area has got some clients in Lebanon. The Lebanese love this. They love to have somebody protecting them, and they feel they can go out and do whatever they like and get away with it. And there are certain people who consider themselves to be our clients. This is to a certain extent a hangover from the period of the capitulation, of extraterritorial status which the citizens of western powers enjoyed under the Turkish, under the Ottoman Empire.

Q: *The protégés.*

PARKER: Protégé, yes.

Q: *Protective people.*

PARKER: Yes. If they don't have a protecting power, they will go out and seek one. As long as people were not armed, this was fairly benign. It was considered funny that nobody was paying much attention to the laws. There were certain basic laws. Laws relating to business crime were very strict. You had to keep your word in a business transaction. This was a commercial society.

Q: *This is the Levant.*

PARKER: Yes, this is the Levant. This is glorious free private enterprise carried to its logical conclusion. If you were a merchant, your word was your bond. But if you were a politician or a lawyer or something else, you could get away with just about anything. Let's see, where was I?

When the French came in, they did what they did every place in North Africa and elsewhere. They prohibited rifled weapons. Couldn't own a rifled weapon. R-I-F-L-E-D. That is, a weapon which put a spin on the bullets so that they will go a longer distance.

Q: *Basically, allowing the hunter to have his shotgun to shoot rabbits.*

PARKER: He could have a shotgun to shoot rabbits, but he couldn't have anything with long range. So that you couldn't sit on top of your mountain and kill people in the valley down below. People had shotguns, and they had very little ammunition for them. Every Lebanese worth his salt had a pistol, but he couldn't hit anything with it. It was, you know, no bigger than a thirty-eight at the most. The amount of trouble that could be caused was limited. But by 1975-76, people were heavily armed, heavily supplied with ammunition, and the possibilities for trouble were enormous. And they greatly outnumbered the army in numbers and in fire power.

Q: *From your position and from the State Department position, were we doing anything to stop other people from arming them? I mean, particularly our clients state, Israel.*

PARKER: No. We were, in fact, we sort of connived at this because at one point the Christians came to us and said, "We are running out of ammunition. If you and the Israelis don't do something quickly, we are going to be slaughtered by Jumblatt. We, in effect, connived that the Israelis resupply the Maronites.

Q: *I have something in looking up a newspaper and seeing in August of '77 that the United States admits that Israel was using U.S. arms to help Christians.*

PARKER: Right.

Q: *Was that coming out at your request, or was that coming out of the State Department?*

PARKER: You mean that statement?

Q: *No, I mean, how this happened. Did somebody come to you from the Christian community and say, "We are out of arms," and you relayed it to Washington?*

PARKER: Well, no, this happened in '76. I forget who they came to, our chargé or Dean Brown or whoever was there at the time. I think possibly Dean Brown, or maybe they were making representations here. They have all sorts of would-be diplomats, official and otherwise in Washington. They had exchanges with the Israelis about this. Kissinger was involved. This was Kissinger's decision that we should agree to this resupply, and if necessary, assist with it. At this point, I forget the details of what we did. But I know that we were in accord.

Q: *So it really surfaced while you were there, but the fact is that we had done it before.*

PARKER: Yes, well, no. We had done it before. In '77, the Israelis were still supplying arms to the Maronites. You know, at any given time -- I don't know what this particular declaration is referring to, I would have to look up the telegrams -- but probably I can imagine it's the arrival of a shipload of old Sherman tanks that they are turning over to the Maronites. And this had been picked up by the press or somebody, and somebody is making an issue of it.

Q: *How did you view our embassy and our relations with Israel as from your observation point?*

PARKER: Well, I had a very -- what shall I say -- difficult time. There was the usual problem that we and Tel Aviv didn't see things the same way. Sam Lewis and I had quite different views of the situation.

Q: *He was our ambassador.*

PARKER: He was our ambassador in Tel Aviv. And that's sort of normal. In this case, I was particularly disturbed that we were, in effect, acquiescing Israeli hegemony over southern Lebanon. And part of our saying that we -- and we said this repeatedly -- that we support the territorial integrity of Lebanon, and we fully support the central government. We were not willing to say, "No," to the Israelis to get the hell out of south Lebanon. And they were supporting this renegade down there, Major Haddad, who had armed a little strip of Maronite villages along the border that he had organized against the Shia and against the Palestinians in a sort of a village defense effort. I can sympathize with that, but what it meant was that -- I mean, the way to deal with that problem was not to arm the villagers, but to get the Lebanese army down there and get in control of this area so it could police and defend it against the Palestinians which I think it would

have done. But between the Israelis and the reluctance of the Lebanese to really take any strong measures in this respect, Lebanon lost control of southern Lebanon, and it's been a continuing source of problems.

Q: *It sounds like we've had quite a bit of influence for good or for bad in Lebanon.*

PARKER: We have enormous influence in Lebanon.

Q: *What are our interests? As you saw them at the time, what were our interests as far as --*

PARKER: Well, we have no strategic or material interest in Lebanon. There is an American university there with a first-class hospital that's very important. But it's important really to Lebanon and to the area, it's not of any great intrinsic importance to the United States. It makes us feel good to support it. We think we are doing something positive. It's the one positive thing we are doing in Lebanon. I mean, that we can point to. And this seems to have worked. We have tried a lot of other things, but none of them seem to have worked very well.

I personally feel that the area has been rather successful in quarantining Lebanon and isolating this illness, but we are never going to bring the terrorism problem under control until there is peace in Lebanon. As long as the terrorists can move in and out of there at will as they do, there is going to be no way of getting them. The only way you are going to control the terrorists in the end is by having responsible governments that will suppress and control them.

Q: *Would you say our policy at the time you were there maybe somewhat indirectly but as a moving force was our relations with Israel as regards to Lebanon -- I mean, was everything predicated in what does this mean to Israel?*

PARKER: Well, not so much that as we simply weren't going to cross the Israelis. It wasn't worth it. The Israelis had too much support in our Congress. If the Lebanese had been more resolute and better organized, and we had some chance of showing some positive accomplishment if we could get the Israelis to withdraw, I think we would have acted differently. But the Lebanese were such wimps that we weren't going to take the risk of confronting Israel and a hostile Congress. I mean, this is in a period when the Israelis controlled seventy-six senators, and we weren't going to take them on.

Q: *What about Lebanese-Americans? There is a sizable group of Lebanese and always has been in the United States. Did they play much of a role in our policy?*

PARKER: I would say a largely destructive role.

Q: *Destructive?*

PARKER: Destructive. The Lebanese have brought their feuds with them to the United States. They have been badly divided by the same religious divisions that divide them in Lebanon. The Maronites are interested in the Maronites, and the Druze in the Druze, and so forth, quite naturally. Each one has sought to push the interests of its own sect. The Maronites have been the most

effective in this. Some day I think some of these people are going to have a lot to answer for if the real history of this era is ever written.

Q: *I am speaking now maybe a little bit nuts and bolts, but did you ever get involved in major consular problems there because it would strike me that this would be a place where you would have a lot of -- if not just straight Americans, Lebanese- Americans -- who have gotten in trouble in a difficult place in getting them out?*

PARKER: We had a lot of problems. In '76 I believe, '75 or '76, we moved our consular operations out of Beirut during the first phase of the civil war. We moved the files to various places, and Lebanese would have to go to Athens or Cyprus or I think maybe they could go to Damascus or Amman to get visas and passport services. We just sort of reconstituted the consular section when I got there. We built it up and began performing consular functions. We gradually brought the files back. This was part of the reconstruction effort. I don't know what we are doing today. I imagine we have moved them back out again.

My experiences is the worst problems are not with the foreign-born Americans, not with the Lebanese-Americans in Lebanon. It's with the American-Americans in Lebanon who have been there too long. Those are the people who end up as hostages. Those are the people who don't have enough sense to leave the country when they are told to. And they are the ones who are conspicuous and who get robbed and lose their passports and so forth. The Lebanese-Americans, in my experience, were pretty self-reliant. Most of the American-Americans had shipped out in '76. There were very few of them left there when we got there. There had been a large American community. Very few of them remained. Those that did were by and large pretty self-reliant. We had exported most of the consular problems by then.

We were giving special status to Lebanese visa applicants. They were all sort of automatically eligible for asylum for a period there. At other Foreign Service posts other than Beirut we issued a great many visas. That also cleared up a lot of problems that we might otherwise have had. We had taken care of a good part of the demand. We didn't have the long lines that we've had in the past.

Q: *How about from the desk now? I mean, without really any instructions, were you getting mixed signals? Was there a clear policy? This is the Carter administration. The time of Camp David getting underway and all that. Did Lebanon play any role really in sort of Middle East considerations or was this considered too difficult to deal with, you were left with the problem yourself?*

PARKER: Well, the issue really got critical in '82, well after I had left, four years after I had left, when we tied progress in Lebanon to progress on the Arab-Israel question.

At the time I was there, there was a certain amount of polite attention paid to Lebanon, but it was not regarded as a player of any influence. When there was talk of a Geneva conference which preceded and precipitated Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, the Lebanese were very anxious to be invited to Geneva. They felt they had an interest in this, and they wanted to take part in it. And we said, "Of course, you will be invited." But we didn't really see that they were going to play a major role in it. I think that the interests of other parties, notably Syria and Israel, really took precedence in

the minds of the United States over those of Lebanon.

Well, you know, you said earlier that we didn't want to cross the Israelis. We also didn't want to cross the Syrians. Of course, we thought, I thought that the Syrian presence there was essential to maintaining security. I thought, the Foreign Minister thought, the President of Lebanon thought that if you pull the Syrians out, we are going to have chaos here. The fighting is going to resume immediately. It's the only police force we've got. The only reasonable substitute for it is a reconstituted Lebanese army. I don't know how much ink has been spilled on that over the years and how many visits and promises and oaths and so forth have been made and exchanged and given, but we are no closer today than we were when we started in 1977 in having an effective Lebanese army.

Q: *So in a way, almost all parties kind of wanted to keep Lebanon isolated from --*

PARKER: Yes. Nobody knew what to do about it. They just wanted to make sure it didn't spread to their doorstep.

Q: *You are reporting on this very complex situation, which reminds me, except it's lethal, of some of the permutations of battalion politics, but you would report to Washington. Would anybody, I mean other than the man or woman who had to read the reports, I mean really be able to do anything except, "My God, it's a complicated situation"? Or did they just concentrate on the Israeli problem dealing with the other Arab states?*

PARKER: Well, I think a lot of people felt sorry for me, but I have always been known for my telegraphic style. My telegrams were always read by people. They were always looking for the hidden joke in it. I think it was Harold Nicholson said, "One way to ensure that your telegrams are read is to have a sense of humor, but it's less likely to ensure that they are going to be taken seriously."

At one point, I know that the Deputy Secretary, Christopher, had concluded that I really wasn't a serious person, and he was very upset by some of the things I had said in my telegrams. But at this point, I felt that I really didn't care. I was in that country risking my life every day. I was going to engage in all the gallows humor I wanted to. I was going to say things that I had on my chest and to hell with what anybody else thought. My staff was instructed to stop me if I went too far. And some of them are better at that than others. I've since read a number of these telegrams in the Department, and I put an awful lot of words is all I can say. There is a great historical record there for somebody, but they are going to have to dig through a mountain of verbiage.

Q: *But it does point out one thing. You know, when talking to senior Foreign Service retired people and ask, "What makes a good Foreign Service Officer?" Really right at the top or almost equal to analytical ability is a sense of humor for the most part. Otherwise, I mean, this gets you through a lot of situations and gives you a certain amount of objectivity, don't you think?*

PARKER: Yes. I was guided by Eisenhower's dictum that, "Always take your job but never yourself seriously." But, of course, the obverse of that is that if you don't take yourself seriously, nobody else will. But I tried to maintain sort of a, you know, philosophical view of what was going

on and to see the absurdity of what was being said and what was being done.

There wasn't much the Department could do. A. The only thing I can fault them for really was this toleration of the Israeli incursions into Lebanon. We were very wimpish about that, particularly in 1978, when we made a real effort to try to send Lebanese troops to the south, and we were balked by the Israelis, and Washington just did nothing about it. It really was very disappointing to me.

Q: *Before we move on to your last assignment, could you talk a little about the staff at the embassy?*

PARKER: In Beirut?

Q: *In Beirut. How good were they? Bad? Problems?*

PARKER: We had a lot of problems. Beirut was a volunteer post because it was dangerous. We couldn't be all that choosy. I had a couple of real doozies on my staff. People that in any normal service should have been selected out. One of them at least I heard was subsequently. People who were, you know, trying to get away from their wives. They said it was because they needed the money to buy special education for their child or something like that. But what it really was they wanted to go and live with a mama-san in Beirut or some place like that.

Q: *You are describing the staff in Saigon in many cases.*

PARKER: Yes, well, I think so.

Q: *War does this.*

PARKER: I asked for an officer to replace one that was leaving, and the only officer that they could come up with the qualifications was somebody who had been there before and whose purpose in coming we realized after he had got there was to take up with a Lebanese girlfriend leaving a wife and family back here in the United States. He got in trouble with my successor very quickly. He was moved on.

We had some very good people, some very good administrative people. I had the best security people I've ever had. This is sort of a rare bird in the security field, but I had a very good security team. I had an administrative officer, a couple of administrative officers who were first- class.

Q: *Who are these, the administrative officers?*

PARKER: Well, the first one was Chuck Baquet. The other was Robert Waska. Had a very good aid officer who was very hard working and effective.

I had a defense attaché whom I liked very much. I was very fond of him personally but who was forever putting his foot into it with the Lebanese. The Foreign Minister was always complaining about things that he had said. And I was always having to defend him, and the Foreign Minister didn't understand the context and so forth. He was a source of difficulty.

I had a good deputy Chief of Mission, George Lane, who went on to be ambassador to Yemen. He was a very solid and reassuring sort of fellow to have.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv, Israel (1978-1982)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: Looking back, I think that's very true. All right, let's turn to Lebanon. You got to Israel when?

COWAL: I got to Israel in 1978.

Q: How, as you saw it, because things really kept moving up and up and up, but how were events in Lebanon in '78 when you got there, as reflected in Israel, and how concerned were you?

COWAL: Well, I think as I recall, I was not the political officer, I was the cultural officer, as you know, so I was much more concentrating on Israel proper than on anything else going on around Israel. But certainly, my deep sense of it was that Lebanon was certainly always the leitmotif, that whatever else was going on, there was always Lebanon. Even though we were USIA officers, and in my case cultural officers, therefore not even all that involved in the press, which tends to be more political, we all served as embassy duty officers and so on. I remember being the duty officer for the first time and not knowing what to expect, getting called, and this must have been '78 or maybe early '79, but during one night, getting called into the embassy three or four separate times.

I'd have to get in my car, drive to the embassy, read the message, and those were always Lebanon. Later on, I seem to recall duty officers actually just spending the night in the embassy because the pace of the cable traffic was so rapid. There were certainly other momentous events, many of them on the good side. The bookends for me were arriving there and immediately having Camp David, and leaving at the time of the invasion of Lebanon. Although Camp David seemed to be pointing in a different direction, there was always this undercurrent of the constant attacks on the northern part of Israel coming out of Lebanon. There was Israeli unhappiness with that and with the guerilla groups, which had their bases in Lebanon and then Syria. They felt they would never be secure until they did something about, and constant U.S. pressure that we would regard any Israeli invasion of Lebanon to be a very grave and serious act.

Some of that, of course, is good prelude for trying to work on Cuba and so on, because we have somewhat of the same situation of having very strong domestic interests, which are really trying to drive our foreign policy. Then you have the United States having a foreign policy which it wishes to be something else. We attempted to rein in Israel, because we didn't consider Israeli aggression to be useful to our overall foreign policy in the Middle East and what we were trying to achieve in the Middle East: whether that was secure oil or whatever else, was constantly at tension with people in the United States and the Israelis who could work those people very well in the United States to essentially be putting the bonds on the U.S. diplomatic establishment every bit as we tried to put the reins on the Israelis. I think there was a constant tug of war in that situation.

Q: Was there a feeling when you were there that the Israelis were getting ready to do something? Concerns that the Israelis, their frustration level to reach a certain point where they would go, and we were considering that this would be a bad thing?

COWAL: Right, we did consider that that would be a bad thing, and we did see that tension level rising. I think what made it so difficult is that the State Department, or the Foreign Service, wasn't the only deliverer of messages to Israel. The messages that the Israelis got were clearly mixed, as they saw their friends in Congress and their supporters. I guess that's the context in which I was going to mention the John Glenn visit.

Glenn came out shortly before I left. It was probably the spring of '82. Again, because Sam Lewis was a pioneer and didn't think that all assignments for carrying forward on important embassy projects should always be in the hands of State Department officers, as well as making USIA and other people duty officers, we were also control officers. I was asked if I would be the control officer for John Glenn, or I was assigned to be the control officer for John Glenn, although he was coming not for a cultural visit. He was coming to observe, as a senator ...

Q: He was a senator.

COWAL: He was a senator at the time. The Israelis would do a wonderful job at briefing members of the U.S. Senate. They, of course, had a story to tell and they were good about telling it. You could easily come and understand what remarkable things they had achieved, which indeed they had, whether it was in agriculture or it was in science or it was in cultural things. There were a lot of achievements, and they would keep every visitor busy from day until night running around and seeing all the marvelous things that they had done, and they had a very good public diplomacy program, and they particularly worked on people who were key political officials in the United States.

We also wanted Glenn, during that visit, to deliver the message that the State Department was trying to deliver, reinforce that a popular and well-known senator who happened to be a Democrat with a Republican administration, nonetheless also carried this message that unbound Israeli expansionism or playing around with Lebanon was not something which we perceived ...

Q: Lebanon and the settlements are sort of tied together at that point, or not?

COWAL: No, I think they're somewhat separate issues.

Q: I mean, we were treating them as separate issues?

COWAL: We were certainly treating them as separate issues. At any rate, we were put into the hands of the Israelis who wanted Glenn, among other things, to understand how difficult it was for Israel to protect its own citizens and its own property, surrounded as they were – and in a way, the issues touched – surrounded as they were by what they regarded as hostile forces. And in the case of the settlements, had they not had the settlements, the 1948 boundaries of Israel meant that in one part of the country, there was exactly nine miles between Jordan and the sea. So, of course, the Israelis saw the settlements and the whole West Bank, Judea and Samaria, as being a way of pushing that enemy back to a position where that enemy couldn't so easily perpetrate terrorist actions or anything else on the Israeli population.

I happen to think that all of that in fact made them less secure, rather than more secure. But at any rate, there was a popular perception, at least in the Likud party, and shared by many Israelis, that after all you just had to look at the map, and what you had to do was push this line back and provide greater security. So the settlements played a huge role in that, because, first of all, you had this influx of population coming out of Lebanon and later out of Ethiopia, and of course later out of Russia and so a real strain on the population base in Israel, and a wanting to expand your territory into these other issues, playing into the political issue of "this will make us safer" also. The expansion of Israel to what they would call greater Israel, biblical Israel, played into a very practical terms as well as political and religious, so it became very important.

The other place from which Israel was extremely vulnerable was being shelled from Lebanon and from the Golan Heights, which was controlled – the top of the heights had been controlled by Syria until the Israelis in the 1967 war took, as well as taking the West Bank, they took the Golan Heights – or the top of the Golan Heights. They pushed the Syrians back. Some of those same Syrian factions then went into Lebanon and shelled the settlements – we'd call them settlements – but kibbutzes and stuff in the north of Israel from their base in Lebanon. So the Israelis wanted John Glenn to understand that not controlling the Golan Heights was extremely dangerous to the Israeli towns and cities and farms beneath the Golan Heights.

The problem was that the United States never accepted Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. They always considered that to be occupied territory which would be part of an eventual peace agreement. In order to indicate our unwillingness to accept their sovereignty over the Golan Heights, it was forbidden for any member of the diplomatic community to go there. The ambassador wouldn't go. You would never go there in the company of Israelis, because that would be indicating that you respected their sovereignty, and they were always trying to do this creep. They were always trying to make facts on the ground, essentially. The settlements became facts, and people visiting under their auspices became facts.

We were on a helicopter and supposedly going to visit some of the Israeli towns, and the helicopter landed and we realized we were on the Golan Heights, which of course was where I wasn't supposed to be. Of course, as we got out of the helicopter, they had all the press there, and all the TV crews. Essentially, we had been duped. So Glenn said to me, "Just stand behind me, nobody

will ever see you," because he was much bigger than I was, of course. And so that's what we did. I stood behind him and the press never caught the fact that there was a U.S. embassy official on the Golan Heights, which they would have exploited.

It was a situation of – it was very interesting because it also showed that even governments that are supposedly the best of friends, when they're trying to achieve a political objective, will not necessarily hesitate to embarrass their friends. Personally I did have many good Israeli friends and certainly our countries had the best of relationships, but there were nonetheless always tensions in that relationship, because they were never very happy with U.S. policy. It was always "what did you do for me today?" sort of thing. Whatever we had done, it wasn't quite enough. We could never quite prove our unconditional love, and I think that was an issue and a problem.

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Q: Well, first place, before we go to Iran, in Lebanon, were the hostages there – this is the time of the Lebanese civil war, or when Americans were being taken hostage. Did that have any reflections on life in your business?

COWAL: I left right before Sabra and Shatila happened. I left in June, and that was in September of 1982. I think the reflection was that between the huge hostage taking in Iran, when the Iranians took over the American embassy, and the fact that journalists and others were getting kidnapped on a more individual basis in Lebanon, made the whole world seem less secure to us.

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Q: What was the reaction from the embassy and from your contacts, because it looked like Sharon was running away with it? He was defense minister.

COWAL: I was at the meeting when Glenn went to see Begin. Of course, so was Lewis, and we were constantly briefing, Sam was, high-level visitors like that that they had to deliver the message that there was no green light there, that whatever they might think the American people thought or the American Congress thought, that the American government would take a very negative view of an Israeli invasion of Lebanon. I heard Glenn deliver that message. Anybody who says that, "Gee, they didn't know, they never heard from the American government that this would be something we would regard very adversely," doesn't understand the whole story. They might have gotten winks or nods from their particular friends in Congress, but they got a drumbeat from Sam and from every person who came to visit. I saw that part of it.

I would say that most of my Israeli friends, and I've already described them – and the tension began to build. You began to know that it might well happen as Sharon ran amok. I would get calls every day from people, either at the office or at home, and they would say, "You," meaning the American government, not me, Sally, "You have to stop these people. You are the only thing they will listen to. You have to stop them, because they are heading for disaster." I can remember that extremely clearly.

I was originally supposed to leave in August and go to the Senior Seminar, and suddenly I had to

take over, and we'll get onto that next time, but I had to take over this job, the way it always is in the Foreign Service. It simply had to be done and could only be done by me, and must be done tomorrow and not in August or any other time. Therefore, I would leave in two weeks and get on a plane and go to work the next day and have deferred home leave and all that sort of stuff. So suddenly I was on a fast track to doing something else. I think I got my orders the day of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which was in June sometime, and I had 10 days. I was going to leave 10 days later, after I got my orders, and really I had been there four years, and really I had an enormous number of friends and contacts, and despite the fact that all this was going on, everybody wanted to have a farewell party for me.

So I would have, sort of always gone through, the kind of breakfast, lunch and dinner when it's all sort of a blur and you think you're never going to get done having these parties, but you do want to see everybody. It was so surreal, because every night I would be at a group of friends, a party sort of for me, and many of the men who would come would have earlier in the day been in Lebanon. In other words, they were soldiers who were sort of mobilized for day trips, and then they would come back at night and go home and sleep in their own beds. It was a very strange situation. Or somebody would have been there the week before or whatever. Because of this whole reserve thing, everybody got called up.

I mean, obviously, the regular troops were doing what the regular troops were doing. The reservists were usually on logistical missions or they were doctors or they were something or another, whereas they weren't actually mobilized but they were required to do certain things. So it was very surreal, were we in a war? Then, of course, my own emotions, my own at leaving, but I think one thing really sticks out in my mind, and that was going to the largest hospital in Tel Aviv, and it's called Tel Hashomer Hospital. The director of the hospital was a friend of mine, a medical doctor, who was also the chairman of the Fulbright Commission, and I had obviously worked very closely with them.

I can't remember his medical degrees, but whatever they were, he was at that point running this 1,000-bed hospital or whatever, with six operating rooms. I went to pay a farewell call on him as the chairman of the Fulbright Commission, and he was maybe 15 or 20 minutes late to the meeting, which was uncharacteristic for him, and he walked in the room and he apologized for keeping me waiting. He said he had just been in a meeting of the whole board of directors of the hospital, because they had been called together to make a decision about whether they would tie up one of the operating theaters for an eight-hour operation on a small Lebanese girl who was a blue baby, and who had been brought back in an Israeli military hospital by Israeli soldiers who had seen her on the street and realized that she needed an operation.

Q: I might add that in present-day terms, a blue baby was a child who was suffering from heart deficiency.

COWAL: Right, and it looked that way. So this was a baby whose heart – apparently, probably one of these medics who was up there saw this child on the street, recognized immediately, without doing a CAT scan or something, what the diagnosis was. They had somehow brought this child and the mother on the helicopter to Tel Hashomer Hospital, along with some wounded Israeli soldiers who had been evacuated. So the hospital board had had a long meeting to decide whether

or not the operating theater and doctors should be occupied to do this operation, and they had decided that it should happen. That, to me, said so many things about Israel, and my own sort of conflicted notions of what it was all about. Was it this power country invading a small neighbor, or was it this humanitarian "we have something to offer the world and maybe we can express that in the form of an operation on a child who won't live another year if she doesn't have." I guess we'll leave it there.

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Q: So, in a way, this was a backfire or whatever you want to call it. Well, back to Israel. Israel, at this point, more or less where was it vis-à-vis its troops in Lebanon?

COWAL: Well, they were occupying Lebanon.

Q: It was for all intents and purposes a pretty illegal invasion of Lebanon by Sharon, leading as defense minister, and I guess backing from others, and there had been some pretty despicable things done by the time you got to the ...

COWAL: Yes.

Q: So what were we doing in the UN vis-à-vis Israel?

COWAL: Well, defending Israel at every turn, of course.

Q: I mean, here is the thing within this policy. You can understand our political leaders, they're scared to death of the Jewish vote and Jewish money, and, not as much then probably as they are now, of the Christian right.

COWAL: That's a new factor.

Q: I mean, politically, issuing any opposition to whatever Israel was doing was not politically ...

COWAL: The most interesting thing I think I actually got involved in was after Jeane left. Jeane and the Israeli permanent representative, Bibi Netanyahu, were close friends, and of course he later became prime minister. They shared inclinations about things that weren't really my inclinations. Although I was a great supporter of Israel – was and am a great supporter of Israel – my Israeli friends and contacts are, generally speaking, not in the Likud. They're generally speaking people who believe it would have been smarter for Israel to withdraw from the West Bank early on, and that it was not smart to invade Lebanon, and would have been smarter to get out right away. Again, I guess I wasn't particularly in sync with that administration. I think after Jeane left, and I guess Netanyahu was still there, I was able to get Ambassador Walters to get Secretary Shultz to agree, for the first time, not to veto a resolution which condemned Israel. I think it was the first resolution that ever passed the Security Council in condemnation of Israel. The United States did not vote for it, but we didn't veto it. That was when the Israelis bombed the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) camps in Tunis. An immediate human cry went up about this Israeli action, obviously inflicting grave suffering not only on the target, which was the PLO, but on a perfectly,

if not neutral, at least perfectly innocent, third country, which had nothing to do with it at all except having agreed to allow the Palestinians to come there when the Israelis wanted the Palestinians out of Lebanon

PETER M. CODY
Director, USAID
Beirut (1979-1989)

Peter M. Cody was born in France in 1925. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Yale University and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Mr. Cody's career included positions in Mexico, San Salvador, Cambodia, Laos, Paraguay, Ecuador, the Philippines, Lebanon, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Melbourne Spector in 1993.

CODY: I went to the Philippines in '76. So I agreed to go to Lebanon. In fact, I enjoyed the tour in Lebanon very much, despite all the problems. I enjoyed Lebanon. Lebanon is such a fascinating place, despite its problems, because of it's history. The Crusaders and the Romans and Alexander and St. George all had a role there. If you have any historical interest, you can find it there. And the Lebanese people, as individuals are enjoyable. They do awful things to each other, but as individuals, they were really competent people. I met people I really admired; for example the Sunni Muslim who was my counterpart and equivalent to the Minister of Plan. He could have served as finance minister or that kind of position in any government in Europe -- Mohammed Atallah. I worked with local YMCA people and others who were really first-rate.

Q: *What kinds of things did you do in Lebanon?*

CODY: The Lebanon situation was quite interesting and intriguing.

Q: *By then things were rather dicey in Lebanon.*

CODY: They were dicey. They'd had the war since '74 and here we were in '79. There was a whole downtown area where you couldn't go. It was controlled by snipers and thoroughly shot up. But the U.S. policy in those days was to help the government of Lebanon, which was a pretty shaky government, under President Sarkis, who was one of their more nondescript presidents, to show that the central government provided services in all geographic locations and to all elements of the population. That is, Shiite, Sunni, Maronite Christians, Orthodox Christians, Druze etc. We had a lot of very small projects which we tried to plaster all over the place. Some of them were quite successful. Not all of them. One of them, for example, was to train young men as an alternative to going into some of these militia, in building trade skills for a period of four months. It was a mobile program. We had several of them at once. We'd take it to a Druze area, we'd take it to a Palestinian area, and we'd take it to a Maronite Christian area. It was run by the YMCA out of Lebanon. It was very successful. We had young men from fourteen to twenty-four, maybe even twenty-nine. They learned something, they worked at it, and it helped keep them out of the militia. It didn't solve all the country's problems. We trained thirty, forty at a time.

Q: *They did that rather than become part of "rent-a-crowd."*

CODY: Yes, rather than "rent-a-militia-man" for 600 pounds a month and all you can loot. And we had some other programs in health. We were rebuilding the hospital in Tripoli. We had a housing guarantee program and were able to rebuild some houses, the same house, three times.

Q: *Literally?*

CODY: Literally, yes. And we had an agricultural program. So I was able to really travel all over that country, and I took additional trips, on my own time. I became very interested in Roman ruins and discovered that in addition to the well known large ones at Baalbeca, there were in addition about sixty other smaller temples I found around with the help of books and poking around.

Q: *Fascinating.*

CODY: The Crusader ruins were also very interesting. So I enjoyed Lebanon. I'm not quite sure why this was allowed. My wife and daughter were authorized to be there. In fact, my daughter went for a year to the American University in Beirut. One of our bigger projects was helping them, both the American University and American Hospital, through a separate program in AID, but still it was through AID. The only other not-embassy-employed dependent in Lebanon was the ambassador's wife. There were some couples who worked there. For example, the admin officer's wife was the secretary of the economic section. Or you had two people working the code room who were married. So for non-embassy-employed dependents, there were only three: the ambassador's wife, Rosa, and Cecilia.

The ambassador there was an interesting person, John Gunther Dean. He was the right ambassador for that place. He was a man with a lot of guts and a lot of gung-ho. He was a little insecure personality sometimes. He was a naturalized American who still spoke English with a strong German accent. He spoke French very well. In fact, his wife was French. I had Lebanese who complained that the American ambassador was always speaking French instead of English, because all the Lebanese speak Arabic and, in general, the Christians speak French and the Muslims speak English, if they speak a foreign language. There are a lot of exceptions to this, and there are a lot of people who speak both. I'll give you an example. The prime minister, who was a Sunni Muslim, spoke fluent English. He had been a professor at the American University at Beirut. He did not speak French. President Sarkis, who was a Maronite Christian, who had gone to St. Josef University, did not speak English; he spoke French. They obviously spoke to each other in Arabic.

In any event, I enjoyed my time there. I was there a year and a half, which is probably enough. At the end of the year and a half, I made some calculations and noted I practically had the full amount of service that one could be allowed to accumulate. I had thirty-three years. Thirty-five is the maximum. So I decided it was a good time to see what I could do as a consultant. I sometimes have asked myself since then whether I could have stayed on a little longer. I discovered, when I came back, where I would have been sent if I had not retired. I would have gone to Jordan as the AID director. That's the plan they had. They didn't tell me at the time. The person who had recently been

sent to Tunisia as AID Director was drafted, in effect, to go to El Salvador shortly after that, and I suspect that might have happened to me since I had more experience than he in Latin America. So if I'd stayed, I perhaps would have gone another six months in Lebanon, to Jordan for a relatively short period of time, and then to El Salvador.

Q: *Speaking of frying-pan fire.*

CODY: I visited a friend in Jordan, and it seemed like a kind of a dull country, actually. Physically dull and activity-wise dull. There are certain things you can see. You can go to Petra and a few other places like that.

ROBERT S. DILLON
Ambassador
Lebanon (1981-1983)

Ambassador Robert S. Dillon was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree from Duke University in 1951 and joined the State Department in 1956. In addition to serving as ambassador to Lebanon, his career included positions in Venezuela, Turkey, Malaysia, and Egypt. Ambassador Dillon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

DILLON: I was the Ambassador to Lebanon. I dealt with the Lebanese -- all factions. There were fourteen or fifteen Christian sects, three Muslims groups. In Lebanon, the truth is that, as in all of the Middle East, no one reads anything. All communications are verbal; you are in a constant round of meetings. Once you have met with one individual, then you have to meet with everybody else. So an Ambassador's task is to meet all of these people. There was a major faction -- the PLO -- with whom you couldn't meet directly, but there were ways you could be in contact with them as well. I am greatly simplifying, but I would like to leave a picture of an American Ambassador who is constantly out getting to know the people that inhabited Lebanon. I traveled in a long convoy, with armed body-guards. Much of the concern for our safety stemmed from the assassination of Ambassador Frank Meloy who had been killed about five years previously by the PFLP. John Gunther Dean had been fired upon several times, but never hit. We were never sure whether these were serious attempts or not. Dean earnestly believed that the Lebanese Forces had tried to kill him and personally blamed Bashir Gemayel for it. I don't know whether that was true, but it could have been. It was clear that his convoy had been fired upon on several occasions. There was never a direct attack on one of my convoys. We did encounter long distance sniping; once or twice my body-guards actually returned fire. But in a place like Beirut, sniping is hardly considered as nasty or evil as a real attack. John Gunther Dean's convoy was attacked with hand-held rockets (RPGs) which are very dangerous. One just missed the rear of his car.

So I was busy from the outset trying to calm down the "missile" crisis, as it was called. At the same time, I was trying to meet all of the factions. I presented my credentials to President Elias Sarkis, who had been the former head of the central bank -- a portly bachelor who didn't speak English. My French was weak, but we managed to converse. The Foreign Minister, Fouad Boutros, spoke

French and English and Arabic. He was an extremely bright man, whom I liked very much. Another person I dealt with frequently was the head the Deuxieme Bureau (the equivalent of the G-2 of the Lebanese Army) who was Johnny Abdu and is now the Lebanese Ambassador in Paris. Johnny was a military officer who had spent his life in intelligence work, which in Lebanon really means "secret police". "Intelligence" doesn't have the same meaning there as it has with us. He was a very capable guy, whom I used to visit together with Sarkis. Frequently, three of them would be together: Johnny, Fouad Boutros, and Sarkis. In trying to explain Sarkis to people, particularly to Lebanese who criticized him for being "weak". I have explained that Sarkis had a very weak hand to play, but he played it with extraordinary skill. I did come to admire him, as did Phil. He had been elected on an alleged pro-Syrian platform, which was nonsense. He was not; he was like all politicians, a manipulator and a balancer of forces; he did that with considerable success. There is no question in my mind that he was a patriot. The people who described him as weak were usually Maronites who lived in their mountain strongholds; they are the people who today are admirers of Michel Aoun. They felt that there should be a "stronger" response to the Syrians. Interestingly, the Lebanese Forces as well as the Phalangists, were frequently critical of Sarkis in public, but Sarkis had a direct link to these people and that was Johnny. That is one of the reasons I got to know Johnny and later Bashir very well.

Johnny interestingly enough was also the link to the Muslims. He was a Maronite and he had his critics, but the Muslims knew that he spoke for Sarkis and that he would be straight with them. So he was accepted as their interlocutor. In addition to running the security operations, Johnny was the link between Bashir and the Lebanese Forces and the link with the various Muslim elements, including the PLO.

The picture was very complex in the city. There was fighting in the city, usually about "turf". There was a Communist militia. They were well organized, well armed. They had some good Eastern German training. Sometimes they were fighting each other, sometimes they fought the Lebanese Forces. There were constant attempts to work out "cease fires"; they were always broken. The Maronites had a pretty good artillery capability; the others tended to rely more on rockets. The conventional (clearly untrue) explanation for who supplied the Maronites was "wealthy American Lebanese." The source of the artillery was not discussed with me in Washington before I went and there may have been other sources for the artillery, which is very expensive. Resupply was difficult.

Q: *When you went to Lebanon, which was a very complex and difficult situation, were you ever told what American interests there were?*

DILLON: No. I came to the conclusion that the American interest in Lebanon was for people to settle their differences. That is the broad framework. The American Ambassador is brought into conflict particularly with the Maronite community because he is viewed as an apologist for the Muslims. The American Ambassador sits down with these mountain folks, who hate Muslims, and, in their view, are defending themselves, but in the view of others, are defending privilege, which is no longer sustainable. They were told that American policy was not to preserve Lebanon for the Maronites, not for the Christians, but to preserve a country in which all the sects could live together. That goal did not seem impossible to us and had to be reached first of all by stopping the killing. That was our message. Directly and by implication, the message went on to say that if they

wanted to get foreign troops out -- Syrian and Israeli -- the Lebanese would have to learn to cooperate with each other and to stop killing each other. The typical American approach was to try to bring these factions together; sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. In dealing with Bashir, I came to understand by indirection his Israeli connections. It is not the job of the American Ambassador to tell Bashir Gemayel to cease his Israeli connections, but I did say to him on a number of occasions that he would have to choose, if he wanted an independent Lebanon, between the Israelis and the Muslims. Bashir understood. In fact, as he got older, he understood it even better, but he was puzzled by what to do. He generally admired his Mossad case officer, who was a very high level official with whom he worked for a long period of time. He met with Begin whom he also admired. He joked about Israeli Defense Minister Sharon, whom I consider a "butcher". Bashir admired these people, which is an important part of the story. The Mossad case officer was David Kimche, who became well know in American circles later on. Bashir thought that David was the smartest of the lot, which he probably was. Bashir played a very dangerous game. He was often portrayed as a "hawk", but he did understand that if there were to be a Lebanon again, it would have to be a country in which both Christians and Muslims lived in peace. So he was torn; he like all of us, lived with contradictions, which in his case, were very difficult to overcome. Interestingly, at that time, when you spoke of Muslims, it almost always meant to be Sunnis -- the Sunni establishment based in Beirut. The Shiites, although the largest group, were usually ignored. They were the bottom of the pile. People didn't even talk about them very much; when they did, it was usually in scornful terms.

Bashir was one of the first from the Maronite heartland who understood that it was important to deal with the Shiites. Indeed, he eventually did. One of the tragedies is that his brother who succeeded him after his assassination never understood this policy and returned to dealing with the Sunni establishment exclusively. He too regarded the Shiites as low class savages who could be ignored.

Q: *Let me ask you this question. You were the American Ambassador, a long, long way away from your country, advising a foreign government on how to manage its internal problems. Why do that? Why didn't we just ignore the internal Lebanese affairs?*

DILLON: In the first place, as the American ambassador, you are sought out from the first day for advice. Some of that, as I have already suggested, was pure flattery. In the case of Bashir, he was only 33 years old. He was interested in talking to me and to Phil Habib because we were older and had had more experience. Habib was a very distinguished diplomat.

We were a little concerned about the Israeli connection. The Americans were looked upon as experts on Israel, which is really ironic because if there is a group in the world that doesn't understand the Israelis, it is the Americans. Bashir wanted to talk to me about the Israelis. Your question is a good one: why should the American ambassador to Lebanon have an opinion on Bashir's relationship with the Israelis? He really shouldn't, but I did. I knew that it was not realistic to urge Bashir to break the Israeli relationship. I don't think I ever said that to him. I thought, though, that it was very important for me to make clear to him that his relationship with the Israelis was his business. It was not something that the U.S. Government, despite our close relationships with Israel, urged on him. The U.S. Government -- and this was the policy that I discussed with Veliotes on the secure phone -- was a reconciliation among Lebanese factions. We were

particularly anxious that bridges be built between Maronites and the important Muslim groups. We thought that it was only in that way that Lebanon could be reconstructed. It was very much our policy to support the Lebanese army because that Army was viewed as one of the few national institutions. The other national institutions had disappeared. The Army was one of the few places where there was still cooperation between Maronites, Shiites, Sunnis, Druze, Greek Catholics and others. The Army was a particular example where the Maronites and Shiites came together because some of the best soldiers belonged to one or the other sect.

I made a point of keeping this issue in front of Bashir. I did not know what Bashir was saying to the Israelis about me. Later, the Israelis became so hostile to me that he probably gave them the impression that I was trying to break the Bashir-Israel connection. It was an exciting time and I must admit that I enjoyed it. I didn't view my assignment as a bad one. I got tired of living alone in the big house. I wanted my wife with me. I love to go to book stores and I used to browse around when I didn't have anything else to do. I fantasize that one day I will open my own store. One day, soon after my arrival, I went to the largest book store in Beirut to browse. I got to the store; my bodyguards leaped out, raced into the store, and expelled all the clients. So the American Ambassador walked into an empty store; the sole proprietor invited me and told me to take all the time I wanted. I felt very uncomfortable. I spent a very few minutes, bought a book and left. I never went into another store. I realized that I was not free to roam at my pleasure. Despite those restrictions, I was enjoying what I was doing. I could have gone out every night to a dinner or party, but I didn't want to do that. I was being invited to very fancy parties up in the Maronite enclaves above Jonnieh which was just north of where we lived. These were truly fancy parties with people elegantly dressed. The women were very stylish. The platters were filled with delicacies: smoked salmon, caviar, etc. I could have lived on these platters! I succeeded in persuading the Department after a couple of months that dependents could return. Bashir had been shelling the airport periodically and keeping it closed much of the time. The airport was in the Muslim sector of the city and Bashir was just showing his power. We finally persuaded Bashir to allow the airport to operate normally. I think it is to John Gunther Dean's credit that he managed to get Bashir to agree to let the airport be opened, although even after that, he closed it sporadically. So my problem was to satisfy the Department that it was safe for dependents to be in Beirut. I got to Beirut on June 21, 1981. In August, my wife was permitted to join me which improved matters immensely. Phil Habib and Morris Draper lived with me in the house, but the house was large enough to afford us some privacy. My wife took over the management of the household and things improved greatly.

The fall and winter, despite the killings, were not bad. You get hardened to the shelling and the firing. The first time, when someone near you gets killed, it is a terrible experience. As time passes, although always unpleasant, you begin to accept these deaths and the violence. Although I hate to say anything nice about Washington, there are situations in the field in which people can not be expected to make the right judgments. They become so accustomed to violence, killings, bombings and explosions that they lose perspective. You really do become hardened to these events. As I look back, I realize that in the fall and winter of 1981, I had become hardened to the violence, although not indifferent.

There were a couple of instances that I would like to describe. The first happened a few days after my arrival. My cook was killed. His name was Habib. He ran the household. He was not an elegant

cook at all. He was a good, honest guy who did not mind the large number of visitors, the Habib visits, etc. He had been at the residence for several years. He knew his way around. He came from a Maronite village, over the next ridge. He had returned to his village for a wedding. There had not been much violence during this period. By that I mean, there were no major rocket or artillery duels; there may have been sporadic fire. That night, there were three shells probably from the Syrians firing into the Maronite sector. It was for Beirut very peaceful. As I said, our cook went back to his village. He stood in the door of a restaurant where the wedding was being celebrated. A shell dropped right in front of the restaurant. Two people were killed, including Habib. He was literally blown apart. I went to the hospital where he was taken after being hit. He never recovered consciousness, as I remember. But there I was looking at him, as he was dying. Although I had known him for only a couple of weeks, it made quite an impression on me. I kept thinking that nothing was really worth such agony. Intellectually, I had known that for a long time. I had come to understand that most political causes are not worth killing for or dying for. I sat looking at Habib dying, having been blown apart. I was reminded once again how stupid such violence was.

A week or two later, I made one of my first calls on one of the Sunni leaders -- a former Prime Minister from the Sohl family. It was in a fairly peaceful area of Beirut. I went to his apartment on the top floor of the building. He was a charming, sophisticated old man. We sat drinking tea, chatting away. All of a sudden, behind my back, a huge door started to slam shut. It startled both of us. We jumped up and ran to the window. I subsequently learned that is the last thing one should do; you should never run to a window. The reason half of the people in the State Department have blood-shot eyes is because they stood in front of windows when they shattered and the fragments hit them. In any case, when we went to the window we saw four Israeli jets (F-4s -- American made with big Star of Israel on their tails) a few hundred yards away, in an area called Fakhana. They circled the area, dropping their ordinance on what the Israelis later announced to be a "guerrilla headquarters" -- that may or may not have been true. About 150 civilians were killed -- women and children among them. I went to visit Fakhana afterwards. It was easier to take the deaths of a larger number of people. In the case of Habib, you are focusing on one person. When you are confronted by large number of deaths, you are horrified; but you can take it unless you focus on each victim. In a sense it is what gets you through a war. If your buddy isn't killed you don't worry about the hundreds that are. But in this situation, you watch people carrying little kids out of buildings, you see blood all over the place, you hear people screaming and wailing. Ambulances are trying to get through; militiamen are firing in the air trying to clear the streets. It may sound sentimental, but one has to understand the impact that sight of a father holding a dead child has. You come to understand once again that no political objective in the world is worth it.

These were two small incidents in a whole line of things. I was in Lebanon less than two and a half years and I would guess that more than a hundred thousand people were killed during that period. The Israeli invasion killed about 30,000 people. You do get hardened to it, but occasionally you have to stop and look at the situation. Then you feel despair.

Q: *After you witnessed the damage done by the Israeli bombing, did you report that? I am trying to get a feel for this. One of the problems that any Foreign Service officer serving in the Middle East confronts is that Israel is "special" -- you have to be very careful in what you say or you will have the Jewish lobby all over you. Were you at all inhibited in your reporting?*

DILLON: I reported all that I had seen. My predecessor reported all that he had seen. You describe what you have seen and heard as accurately as you can. What happens in Washington is that the staff of the Near East Bureau read the reports as does the intelligence community around the city. In the Fakhana case, it was probably sufficiently important that an encapsulation of events was prepared for the President and other senior officials. But in fact, you never get any feed back. The traffic is all one way. The people in the field report, but seldom is there any response. What is there for Washington to say? I don't know whether the U.S. Government ever raised this incident with the Israelis. We may have; it would be interesting to know.

Some Americans refuse to believe that atrocities are committed. That is one of the reasons for the constant denigration of the "Arabists" in the State Department. An effort is made to discredit their reporting. The events I have described were my immediate introduction to violence. It is one thing to be sitting on a hillside watching an exchange of fire -- you don't see the people and the flares are colorful. But once you see the dead and wounded -- children, women, friends -- that is an entirely different story.

Q: *Why did you recommend in the Summer of 1981 that dependents be permitted to return?*

DILLON: By that time, the level of violence had subsided. It seemed to me and others at the post that adults who choose to share the danger with each other should come and therefore I so recommended to the Department. State Department accepted the recommendation, although over the years, it has become more and more leery about exposing dependents to dangers. Nobody wants to face the potential criticism of having failed to remove people from harm's way. It is probably fair to say that the people on the ground, particularly Ambassadors like myself, are too slow to recommend evacuations. You always hope that the next day will be a better one.

In September, the origin of fire exchanges had become very obscure. Until then, the major battles had been fought between the Christian forces -- the Maronites -- and certain Muslim militia. Those exchanges continued particularly along the "green line". But then started other exchanges that were much harder to understand between, for example, the Communist militia -- mainly Shiites, who had been trained by the East Germans, although their ideology was very vague -- and other factions. Later, who was shooting at whom became unimportant, but at the time, much of the shooting took place straight down the hill from my house. I could see one of the poor Shiite districts and every night there would be tracers across the night sky falling into the section, followed by small explosions. You could see the same thing in other parts of town and occasionally you could see larger exchanges between the Maronites and Muslim groups. But by Beirut standards, this wasn't very heavy fire. By those standards, it just meant that a few people were killed every night. A lot of the firing seemed aimless. You soon learn to distinguish between serious and random firings. The long bursts mean that people are just shooting off guns; when the fighting is serious, it is known by short irregular bursts obviously aimed at a particular person or building. After a while, you recognize the differences. So some of the firing stemmed from people just shooting off ammunition and watching the tracers which were always pretty, but when matters are serious, then you hear heavy ammunition exploding in short irregular bursts.

We lived in East Beirut, in an area called Yarze, closed to Baabda, where the Presidential Palace was, an essentially Maronite area. It was east and slightly north of the city. We could see the city

very clearly from there. We had wealthy neighbors, mostly Christians. There were a couple of Muslim families living there, but that was rare. It was essentially Maronite land, with wealthy Greek Orthodox and other Christians also living there. There were a few Armenians around, although most of them lived in an area called Bourj Barajneh, down in Beirut. The neighbors were friendly, delighted to have the American Ambassador living among them. They were very courteous to my wife. There was an almost unreal atmosphere. There were families around, a fair number of whom were wealthy, who carried on a rather normal life. It was not hard to live in the hills and forget the miseries of the city. You could easily forget that the rest of the country was going to hell.

Q: *Were you or your staff able to get around the rest of the country?*

DILLON: During the first year, we went everywhere. Baalbek was still easily accessible. We would take the regular highway over the mountains to Chtoura, and then to Baalbek. Tripoli was accessible. My security people preferred me to use a helicopter to go to Tripoli, because on the north side of the Maronite enclave, there was still occasional fighting -- between Maronite factions. In the central Maronite areas, the Gemayel clan prevailed; north of there, Franjieh ruled; he and his people had Syrian support and therefore you had fighting between the two Maronite groups. That made the security people nervous about transversing those areas, particularly for the Ambassador. The cities tended to be dominated by Sunnis, who in Lebanon at least tended to be one of the more peaceful groups. They didn't have a militia, which may have been good in some ways although from their point of view was probably a mistake because it allowed their power to dissipate. It forced them to become heavily dependent on the PLO and other Palestinian militia, who had different interests. We would travel into Shiite areas, at least before Hezbollah became a force. The large Shiite organization was Amal. In Washington, in a typical ironic fashion, people would worry about Amal, wondering who these strange and apparently radical people were. On the ground, you realized that Amal was on balance a fairly constructive force. Even though I had not yet heard of Hezbollah we all understood that in the Shiite community there were some dangerous people.

Q: *Did you talk to these various factions?*

DILLON: We did a lot of it. Ryan Crocker, who is currently the Ambassador in Lebanon, was the head of the Political Section and a brilliant officer. Ryan and his staff had terrific contacts. We talked to all groups. The most difficult for us at the time was the PLO and the Palestinians. We did not enter Palestinian refugee camps; it was considered very dangerous to do so. We did not go into the Sabra and Shatila areas. Shatila was the camp; Sabra was the area although it was impossible to know where one started and ended. As you know, these are the sites of the later massacres. But they were large enclaves in middle of Beirut which was clearly out-of-bounds for us. We avoided them because they were dangerous and because of the prohibition against talking to the PLO. The two issues were related; it was dangerous for us because we wouldn't talk to the PLO. The PLO made it clear that they would offer us protection. Indeed, our Chancery was right on a line between an area controlled by the PLO and an area controlled by Walid Jumblatt' Druze group. Both groups offered protection, which we accepted. We didn't talk to the PLO, but we did talk to Palestinians; you can't live in Lebanon without talking to Palestinians.

As I mentioned before, I had a direct liaison with a PLO official which was clandestine, but authorized. In addition to that, there were many people in Lebanon who had good contacts with Palestinians. So we obeyed the restrictions against contacts with the PLO, but we did talk to Palestinians. As far as Sabra-Shatila were concerned and other camps as well, it wasn't simply policy that deterred us from visiting them. People felt vulnerable in those places. The irony is that in the job I had with the UN after retiring from the Foreign Service, I spent a lot of time in the camps. By the late 80s, I made my living working in these camps.

There had been kidnappings going on in Lebanon for some time, but foreigners had not been touched. In fact, there was no violence directed toward foreigners, even though there were many still around.

Q: *We are now in the Fall of 1981. What role did the security officer and his Washington bosses play?*

DILLON: The principal role was to safeguard the Embassy's installations. That included the Chancery, the physical aspects surrounding it, the liaison with the police and the militia. They were also responsible for the safety of the Ambassador, particularly as he moved through the city. In some respects, the Ambassador got elaborate protection.

Others didn't, but that was the name of the game. Nobody wanted to see another Ambassador killed or kidnapped in Lebanon. I did understand that need even though on occasions I was embarrassed. The Ambassador was always taken around by three armored vehicles. There was always one American security officer riding with him along with a trustworthy Lebanese driver. The other security were Lebanese. They were a mixed group representing the various religious groups. The idea was not to be accused of being the captive of only one group. There was some thought given to using only Maronites, but I think that would have been a mistake. When I arrived, the senior local security man was a Sunni, but he had Shiites, Druze, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, etc working for him. There were thirty or forty of these men, armed to the teeth. They had taken so much abuse from all sides that in fact they had bonded together very tightly. I particularly remember the Shiites and the Druze in the group because they were colorful and we enjoyed them. They tended to be a tough bunch, which they enjoyed. When people shot at them, they shot back.

As I said, I would ride in a three car convoy, led almost always by a guy named Mohamed Kurdi. He was a very colorful man, a Sunni, who enjoyed being seen as tough and fearless. We would scream down streets, scattering people and other cars, honking and shouting, sometimes with sirens blaring. We also always had a scout car ahead which was in communication with the convoy reporting what was up ahead. The first times you ride in one of these convoys is kind of exciting -- like a kid with a new game. After a few times, it became old stuff and becomes very routine. You sit in the car, reading or writing, while all the fuss goes by essentially ignored by the Ambassador. The best thing an Ambassador can do in these situations is to leave these matters to the security people. I am sure that all of my colleagues would agree with that. I don't think I ever over-ruled the security people; my tendency is to leave the security issue to the professionals. I did carry a gun in the car. Someone asked me once whether that wasn't a little bit childish. I don't know. I carried a 357 magnum in a briefcase. I had the feeling if we ever got trapped, I wasn't going to sit there and just let things happen without trying to protect myself. Right after I got to Beirut, the French

Ambassador was killed. He was a good man. He had been there a fairly long time and knew his way around Lebanon. The problem that the French had in Lebanon -- and many have the same blind spots -- is that they believed that they knew everything. Indeed, they knew a lot, but they were not invulnerable as they thought. The French Ambassador refused to use an armored car, in contrast to us, for example. He used to look amused when we compared security provisions. Unfortunately, he was murdered because he didn't use an armored car. If he had a properly trained driver, he would have lived. His driver, when his car was cut off by another one and as soon as the shooting started, got on the floor, and took no evasive action. The initial shots missed the Ambassador, but because the car was standing still, the assassins were able to walk up to the car and shoot him from close range. It was a great loss because he was a genuinely decent man, who I am sure was a very good influence on French policy. The French have their own right wing nuts who believed that the French had a sacred duty to support the Christians in Lebanon. That was dangerous and was part of the problem and not a solution. The Ambassador was a counter-weight to those who felt that way. In any case, I didn't want to be in a situation like that and I felt that if I had a gun, at least I could have had some protection. The French did change their attitude towards security after that and began to use an armored car with a follow car filled with security guards. Had they done that earlier, they probably would not have lost an Ambassador.

Q: *You mentioned that you were barred from dealing with the PLO and that caused some unhappiness among your staff. Did you feel that Washington was not "in the real world"?*

DILLON: Yes, although that could be exaggerated. What you feel in a place like Lebanon is not a great separation from the Near East Bureau, but it is sort of you and NEA against everyone else. There was certainly that feeling. You do feel that there are certain quarters in Washington with a great sense of unrealism. When you are in Beirut, the idea that the PLO is any worse than anyone else is ludicrous. When you are in the middle of all of this turmoil, you don't romanticize the PLO, but the idea that somehow the PLO is bad and everybody else is acceptable is ridiculous. The PLO was an important player. The PLO had its share of thugs, but then all factions did. A situation like Lebanon brings out the bullies and the thugs. War and violence will do that. That the PLO people were somehow evil was obviously ludicrous. The idea that the PLO or any of these people were somehow Russian instruments was doubly ludicrous, but we got a lot of that sentiment from Washington. It was the White House; the President of the United States believed that kind of stuff. Whenever something would happen, the question would arise, obviously prompted by the White House, about Russian involvement in Lebanon. There wasn't any Russian involvement! Of course, there were Lebanese that had been trained at one time or another in Eastern Europe; but it was clear to us in Lebanon that the violence was home grown and that these thugs would have taken help from anybody -- Russian, American, Israeli -- they'll take what they can get. The idea that the Russians were somehow fostering the violence was unsupportable. The same could be said for those who thought that we Americans were responsible for the violence in Lebanon. Ridiculous! Neither we nor the Russians were doing anything to keep the violence going. The Israelis were involved to a degree, particularly with some Maronites and some Druze who are on their payroll as well. But the Israelis and some Arab countries were the only outside powers that actually intervened or tried to use Lebanese as their instruments. The two super-powers didn't! I am not suggesting that the Russians were constructive, but their ability to influence events on the ground was almost zero. The little influence they had was in Damascus because they furnished arms to the Syrian Army. There was plenty of evidence that they were very disillusioned, in some ways the

same as we were. They were disillusioned by the unresponsiveness of their "clients". Any American diplomat can understand that problem.

The first time the Russian Ambassador, who could have been a KGB agent for all I knew, said that to me, I didn't take him seriously. After I had been in Beirut for a while, I decided that he was probably 90% right. Undoubtedly, the Russians felt that they had provided lots of assistance to the Syrians and had gotten very little for it.

Q: *Were the Maronites able to mount pressure in Washington through religious circles?*

DILLON: Yes. They tried hard. I am not an expert on the Catholic establishment in the United States. I am not a Catholic myself. I have to say that the Catholic hierarchy in the U.S. was surprisingly sophisticated about these issues. Whatever success Maronites may have had at some levels of that hierarchy, they did not have much active support from the top echelons of the Church.

I came to like the Catholic Relief Service which was headed by Joe Curtin. He was a good guy and he and his staff were very careful about avoiding political issues. They made it very clear that they were not there to support the Maronites; they were there to help everybody. So the Maronites resented them because they could not understand how a Catholic organization could have failed to give them full support. CRS was very careful to spread their assistance to all factions; they were there for humanitarian reasons and helped whoever was in need. Furthermore, there were Catholic groups who were sympathetic to the Palestinians. At one time I would have said that the Palestinians were 85% Sunni Muslims; it became an even greater percentage because a lot of the Christian Palestinians, particularly in Lebanon, after a while stopped identifying themselves as Palestinians. There were fringe terrorist groups that were essentially Palestinian Christians, but the main-line Fatah-PLO was pretty much Sunni Muslims and CSR worked with them.

There was a "Holy Land" Mission, headed by a Catholic priest, who was a terrific guy -- born in Ireland and moved to New York. He was very sympathetic to the Palestinians; he was probably involved with the PLO to a degree that undoubtedly worried some of his superiors. One of the finest people I ever met was Cardinal Cooke from New York. He came to Beirut and I was a little apprehensive, in part because, when I was younger, the New York Catholic hierarchy, under Cardinal Spellman, was very conservative. So I was a little nervous about the visit. No American Ambassador wants to start a fight with the Catholic hierarchy. I didn't know anything about Cooke although somebody had written me that I would like him. Cooke and his party came and they were wonderful people. Cooke was a smart, sensitive, very politically aware man who understood and was concerned about the humanitarian aspects of the Lebanese tragedy. He understood completely that this was not a simple question of Christdom under assault; it was much more complicated than that. He obviously knew a lot about the Maronite leadership and even though he was gracious and polite, he stayed aloof from them and fended off any attempts to be reeled in by them. It was just a great visit. You don't get many visits as an ambassador that you can describe as "great". Most of them are painful ordeals that you suffer through and you are happy at the end if they haven't made matters worse. Cooke was really very good. You rarely meet people at high level whom you think are good people. That may be over-cynical, but Cooke was a good person. I was very pleased at the end of the visit and I wrote a very flowery letter to him, which was certainly not typical for me. I

told him how much his visit had meant. I am glad I wrote that letter because shortly thereafter I found out that Cooke was dying of cancer. He had known it while in Beirut, but I certainly didn't. In a funny sort of a way, the Lebanon experience has always made me feel a lot more kindly towards the American Catholic Church than I was before. I was never hostile to it, but after Lebanon I viewed it much more favorably.

The American-Lebanese League was the American wing of Lebanese Forces and the Phalange; it was active in trying to influence American policy; it was not very successful. It would organize visits for American right-wing conservatives. I remember one visit especially. It was from a dear friend of mine, who is politically very conservative. He and some colleagues came and were taken to the "front lines" (the lines that we crossed all the time). They were given binoculars to see the "enemy". It was done with great excitement. I think that some of these people left believing that they had seen the line where "good" and "evil" confronted each other.

There were Lebanese groups that had other informational outlets in the United States. They were much more active then than they are now, trying to get American support for the Christians, as they always called themselves. It was kind of sad. Americans who go to Lebanon do not go feeling anti-Maronite and indeed when they first arrive, they get a very good impression of them. The men are rich, the women are beautiful. They entertain lavishly. That makes an impression on many visitors. If you are the American Ambassador or any senior American official, there will be a massive attempt to co-opt you. It is fun! You go to parties in lavish homes up in the hills; you are surrounded by sophisticated people, women dripping with jewels and with low cut dresses. People are terribly flattering. You have to keep reminding yourself that you are just a kid from Arlington, VA and that the atmosphere is just make believe. But it was fun! I don't pretend that this doesn't happen in other places or that it had not happened to me before in the Foreign service, but in Lebanon it went on to a degree that I had never seen any place else. What happens to senior Americans is one of two things: a few like this life style so much that they end up sort of selling out because you can spend all of your time drinking expensive wines and whisky and eating caviar. The others -- a majority -- turn very negative and get fed up and indeed become almost anti-Maronite. The constant attempts to manipulate them, the pressure they feel, the over-done flattery just becomes too much.

Q: *What about the non-official American community?*

DILLON: Most of them had left. There were a few remnants of American business men. Then there was the American University of Beirut (AUB) crowd including both Americans and Lebanese who tended not to be Maronites. So they tended to have connections with the Greek Orthodox or the Palestinian or Sunni Muslim communities. That is the crowd that the AUB persons tended to hang around with. The Maronites tended to resent that, even though many attended AUB, although that was not their university of choice. They much preferred St. Joseph, a French Jesuit school which educated the major portion of the Maronite leadership . I am of course generalizing, but the rich Maronites tended to gravitate toward senior American officials who were newcomers and shied away from the older American community represented by the AUB people and the business people.

I liked the Americans who lived in Beirut for years. They tended to be associated with people in

West Beirut (a mixed area but predominantly Muslim) and therefore some of them came under suspicion for being pro-Muslim. West Beirut was where AUB and the American Chancery were located. West Beirut was a traditional Sunni Muslim area even though many Christians and many foreigners lived there. East Beirut was almost solidly Maronite with few foreigners living there. East Beirut was French speaking; West Beirut was English speaking. So there was a strong suspicion among the Maronites that Americans were too friendly to the Muslims, too pro-Palestinian and that was one of the reasons why the Maronites were not very friendly to or very interested in the long-time American residents. As I said, they tended to gravitate toward a new American Ambassador or senior official on the assumption that they didn't know anything and were ripe for some "brain-washing".

Q: *Did that mean that you and your staff tended to look to the resident Americans as a valuable source of information?*

DILLON: Yes. We stayed in touch with them. They were good sources for information. One always had to take into account where they were coming from so that the information could be appropriately evaluated. But in a place like Lebanon, a long established American community was pretty well informed. Like foreign communities everywhere, they were very resistant to change. They had made their peace with the *status quo*. They, and all of us, were guilty of underestimating the importance of the Shiites. That is a very important point! During 1981 and 1982, the simple truth was that Shiites were still being underestimated. The Maronites were scornful of them, but it wasn't just them. One could live in Beirut with an active social life and rarely meet a Shiite. There were enough Greek Orthodox, Maronites, Druze and Sunni Muslims to provide the social contact. It was a social class distinction and religious.

I think I have already mentioned that we were concerned about the Amal. By the time you got to know Nabih Berri, who was the leader of the Amal, you immediately took them seriously. One would quickly come to understand that in the Lebanese context, these were fairly modern men who were moderates. The Washington perception was clouded by a lag. Now everyone understands that the Amal were moderates, but then it wasn't that clear to Washington. It was more concerned with the possibility of Russian influence in these groups and the alliances with the Syrians. I don't know when it was that I first heard of Hezbollah. It was surely they who blew up our Embassy. Shortly after I arrived the name "Hezbollah" cropped up. Crocker and the Agency people who were concerned with internal Lebanese affairs began to report on this group. I suppose that other governments were beginning to get similar reports on the Shiites. This explains in part what happened. Many people who had spent a lot of time in Lebanon never noticed the Shiites.

Q: *Did anyone in the Embassy flag the Shiite problem?*

DILLON: Yes. The political officers in the Embassy, led by Crocker, right from the beginning were watching these people. They were very insistent that the Shiite leadership be included in the calls I made. They wanted Nabih Berri, and Hussein Huseini, the political leader from the Bekaa, included as well as the Shiite religious leaders. They were conscious of the growing power of the Shiites. The young officers took pride in having contact with the "people" which included Shiites, even though they were harder to contact and to get to know, particularly on the social level.

One of the great gaps in the older American community, which we did recognize, was its lack of contacts with the Shiite community. It had good contacts with other Lebanese. Now of course it is a different situation; the PLO is gone. You have to remember how important the PLO and the Palestinians were in the early 80s. In southern Lebanon and in Beirut, they were major players. They had a large armed force which rivaled the Lebanese army, although they didn't have the heavy weapons. But they were a force in major cities like Saida in the south. They may never have been as strong as the Israelis claimed, but they were strong. Long-time resident Americans were always afraid that the American Embassy and the U.S. government didn't understand the Palestinians or the PLO. So often the resident Americans would talk about the Palestinians or the PLO because they felt that we were unrealistic about those groups and didn't understand them. So it was not uncommon for the American Ambassador to be in conversation with some of the American "old timers" talking about the Palestinians and the PLO. There was great Maronite resentment of that syndrome. The Maronites and the Palestinians had become deadly enemies. There had been mutual massacres. The Palestinians and their American sympathizers perceived the U.S. government as stupid and cowardly and needing considerable education about the Palestinians.

Many Maronites perceived the American "old timers" as lacking the proper appreciation of the traditional central role of the Maronites. They felt that the Americans were being taken in by the Palestinians. So we heard a lot about the sins of the Palestinians from the Maronites. The Palestinians pleaded mostly about the justice of their cause. After a while, you turn both sides off. Later it occurred to me that I may have been guilty of assuming I knew what someone was going to say to me and then not paying any attention to them; they might have said something important that I might have missed. But it was usually the same litany over and over again from each side.

Q: *How did Israel fit into these conversations? How did you and your staff view Israel in the pre-June 1982 invasion period?*

DILLON: The attitude towards Israel was cynical. Israel and its American supporters who accused us of that were half right. We were cynical because of the pressure that we felt from Washington to somehow square a circle that couldn't be squared. I never met anybody in Lebanon who was a particular admirer of Israel. The Israelis were seen as tough, brutal, *real-politik* people. The Lebanese were very scornful of Israeli pretensions to be humanitarians. There is an idealistic side to Israel, but when you were in Lebanon it was very difficult to remember it. The Israelis were tough and arrogant. The Lebanese that were recruited by Israel were also tough and brutal. The idealistic side of Zionism or Jewish life was not on display in Lebanon. Even the Maronites, who became deeply involved with the Israelis, basically disliked and distrusted them very much. If there was anything idealistic about Israel, it would not have occurred to Bashir Gemayel, who was an ally. He did not see them in that light, although he did admire their toughness. He thought that the Israelis were right in thinking that the only good Arabs were dead ones. He came to think differently later, but when I first met him, that was very much his point of view.

The Israelis enjoyed exercising hegemony in southern Lebanon. After the invasion, when I went into that area, one would meet the Israeli version of Lawrence of Arabia; that is their Arab specialists. These were not all Mossad (Israeli intelligence) people; Mossad people were involved with the Maronites in the north. After the invasion, the Israeli officials who organized that region

and the now-called South Lebanese Army and got themselves involved with the Druze, recruited a lot of Shiite thugs. The Israeli belonged primarily to Shin Bet (the internal security forces). A lot of them spoke Arabic very well. They were arrogant, as I said. They enjoyed being westerners among the "barbarians". I would occasionally see them; indeed sometimes they would seek me out and talk to me. They loved the idea of lecturing an American Ambassador, even though they hated us. They loved to have the American Ambassador subjected to lectures about the sins of our society and the stupidity of our policies. The Shin Bet guys enjoyed doing that.

The PLO in Lebanon did not depend entirely on Palestinians. They recruited others. They recruited poor Shiites as did a lot of Lebanese factions. Poor Shiite gun-slingers were available; they or their counterparts are available in any society, Many of these same people later were recruited by the Israelis to become members of the South Lebanese Army, although the media always referred to that Army as Christian. But in fact, that Army and the PLO and others all had these poor Shiite gun-slingers working for them. The exasperating thing about being in Lebanon and dealing with these situations was that Washington viewed any reports from Lebanon with suspicion and cynicism, whereas anything reported from Tel Aviv was taken seriously. I have seen some awful garbage from Tel Aviv. That Embassy was not bad; Sam Lewis was a good Ambassador. But they did send some awful garbage which was taken seriously in Washington. Lebanon was viewed as a wild, savage place; the reporting from there was viewed with skepticism and taken with a grain of salt.

A good example of this syndrome is in the events leading up to the invasion. From Lebanon, there were a constant stream of reports from many sources that the Israeli preparations had been made and that they were going to invade. I had become very friendly with Bashir Gemayel, who was the leader of the Lebanese forces. Bashir, who was later murdered, started to feel guilty, I believe, that he was misleading me. He came to me one day, which was not unusual because he used to stop at the Residence frequently. It was usually about ten p.m.; we would sit in the Library and chat and then he would go home. He was afraid that I didn't know that the Israelis would actually mount an invasion. He felt guilty about it. So he "spilled the beans". It must have been sometime in the Spring of 1982. It was clear from the conversation that he wanted me to know.

I called Nick Veliotes, the Assistant Secretary for NEA, on the secure phone. I assume I also sent a message. But I wanted to be sure that Washington understood the context. A report, even from the American Ambassador, would not be as meaningful to Nick unless he understood the circumstances under which the information was received. Bashir did not want the invasion to occur without having told me about it.

(NEXT FEW SENTENCES OBLITERATED BY STATIC ON TAPE)

The invasion preparations in Israel were sufficiently overt so that I could not see how an American official in Israel could have missed them. They could not have minded the extent of them. Sharon did not make that big a secret out of it, but I didn't see any reporting about it until after the invasion had begun. Our staffs in Israel were reporting that the invasion, if it took place at all, would be a limited one, focusing only on the southern part of Lebanon.

Q: *Before we get to the actual invasion, were there any major political events from June 1981, when you arrived in Lebanon, to the invasion date?*

DILLON:

(SENTENCES INAUDIBLE BECAUSE OF TAPE STATIC)

Following that, there was a PLO response with missiles. Phil Habib negotiated a cease fire. The Palestinians were vulnerable and knew it. They wanted the world to see that they had not provoked the invasion. So it was relatively quiet in southern Lebanon in the weeks just prior to the invasion. There was an alleged arms build up by the Palestinians. We saw these reports. We were told that the Palestinians were obtaining long range artillery, smuggled into Lebanon probably from Libyan sources. Your first reaction, of course, is immediately to try to find out more about it, which we were not able to do. But the reports continued. After a while, it occurs to one, that these reports may have been generated by the Israelis. You just can't be sufficiently sure enough to tell Washington with any certainty that it is receiving false reports. All you can do is report suspicions. You can talk to people in Washington, as we used to do all the time, and say that we couldn't confirm that there was long range artillery in southern Lebanon. We could say that it was very difficult to keep a secret in southern Lebanon and despite that we couldn't find any evidence to confirm the reports. There could have been a few howitzers, a few a hand held rockets, but we couldn't find any long range artillery or rockets. We would have to admit that it was certainly possible that Libyans may have been buying this equipment and shipping to Lebanon, but we couldn't find it anywhere. People in the Bureau and CIA understood the nature of our dilemma. But we were certainly never in a position where I as the American Ambassador in Lebanon could send a cable to the President of the United States to tell him that he was being subjected by a disinformation campaign by our allies, the Israelis. I could not say with any evidence that in fact the Israelis were gearing up to an invasion. I could discuss the possibility with my Foreign Service colleagues, but the evidence was not sufficient to carry the warning very far up the decision-making ladder.

The instructions I got from Washington, interestingly enough, were focused on the Palestinians. I was instructed repeatedly to tell them not to be provocative. I did that. The Palestinians asked me why I was making this point. I said: "People in Washington have instructed me to do so. We are interested in constructing a peace here, trying to get the Israelis out of the Sinai, etc." It was not by accident that the final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was followed a few weeks later by their invasion of Lebanon.

Q: *This all happened when Alexander Haig was Secretary of State. Do you know how engaged he was in these events? Did you get a chance to talk to him? There is some sentiment to suggest that he might have been duped by the Israelis.*

DILLON: I don't know that "duped" was the right word. Haig has been accused of encouraging the Israelis. I have always doubted that. Al Haig, as I understand it -- you have to remember that I was a long way from Washington -- was engaged at the time in pressing an idea for "strategic

cooperation," which was fully unrealistic. The idea was that Russians were still the threat and that therefore certain countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel had much in common because they were the ones who would be the biggest losers by Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Therefore, it should have been important to them to become involved in some strategic cooperation with the U.S. My impression is that the White House and NSC staffs had this strategic mind-set and therefore were neither interested in nor sensitive to regional issues. I would fault Haig for letting himself be trapped into this White House perception of the world. I don't see how anybody could believe that obvious crap. I still can't think that that Henry Kissinger really believed that nonsense because he was not stupid. But seeing the world through the East-West confrontation prism was the way the White House and the NSC saw all events in the Middle east. It was so unrealistic, so unrelated to what was going on. There was not a gap between us in Lebanon and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs or between us and the working levels of the CIA. But the gap between ourselves and the rest of the U.S. government was immense because their people kept talking about the importance of our arrangements with the Israelis -- our "strategic Allies" -- which was sheer nonsense. The stockpiling of weapons in Israel bore no relationship to the events or threats in the area.

Q: *There is an old saying that a woman stands behind her husband when he gets in trouble; he however would never have gotten into that trouble unless he had married. It seems to me that is somewhat analogous to our relationship to the Israelis. People would accept our relationship with Israel because of the Jewish vote and money.*

DILLON: I find it very difficult to understand how anyone could believe it. You asked me about Haig. I am not strident on the subject. I don't think he was wrong about everything. Haig was very much part of the strategic thinking. Bill Clark, who was the National Security Advisor, was strictly a political animal with no experience in foreign affairs. Howard Tiescher and people like that were on the NSC staff. Bud McFarlane had just left the job of Counselor of the Department to become the Deputy to Clark. Bud, I think it is fair to say, either out of ambition or conviction, also became part of the "strategic view" group.

Q: *The Israeli invasion created a mountain of problems for us. Were you ever called back to Washington for consultation despite the apparent storm ahead?*

DILLON: Never. I have talked to Sam Lewis a number of times, although not recently. I have never asked him directly, but I am still puzzled by what Sam believed in those pre-invasion days. Obviously, we each reported things that the other did not see, but we saw a lot of each other's reporting. It is hard for me to believe that Sam didn't see some of the preparations. A couple of years after the war, a couple of Israeli journalists -- Schiff was one -- wrote a book about the Lebanese invasion which was pretty good. He made a nasty comment about me, because I was so negative towards Israeli officers at every juncture. I would not let Israelis use my residence. They apparently came to believe that I was "incorrigibly anti-Semitic," which of course is outrageous. The book contains much information about preparations -- about what was going on in Israel before the invasion. The authors of the book certainly had a bias; i.e. that the invasion was a disaster and that Sharon bears the responsibility for it. After reading the book, the question is redoubled in my mind about how our people could sit in Israel right in the middle of the preparations and not have noticed. Not only were there physical preparations, some of which could

be masked, but there were also political and psychological preparations that the Israelis were going through.

Q: *Had you seen any escalation of tensions in the Spring of 1982?*

DILLON: The Palestinians in southern Lebanon were in a very defensive mode. They were making defensive preparations. There were no offensive preparations that I could see. I believe that their political leadership did believe that an invasion was coming, but that there wasn't anything they could do to stop it. They wanted to be very clear that they didn't provoke it. This was a period during which the PLO was trying to play an increasingly political hand with the Americans. Once they had made the agreement with Phil Habib on the cease fire, they adhered to it. Phil has testified to that fact many times. The Palestinians stuck to the letter of the agreement. The Israelis tried to expand the scope of the agreement, which dealt with southern Lebanon. They interpret it to cover anything in the world despite our continued injunction to them that their view was not realistic and that the agreement did not cover any act of Palestinian violence outside southern Lebanon.

The incident that they used as an excuse for the invasion was an Abu Nidal attempted assassination of their Ambassador in London. It had nothing to do with the PLO or Lebanon.

Q: *How did you view the Syrians in this period?*

DILLON: The Syrians loomed very large in our eyes. The Syrian activities in Lebanon were aimed mainly at bolstering their position. The Syrians were in Beirut; they were on the road between Beirut and Chtoura; they were in the Bekaa Valley. They were not in southern Lebanon where the Israelis had declared a "red line" that the Syrians respected. The Syrians were not in the major part of northern Lebanon, but they had some presence in areas controlled by Franjieh. The Syrian army, in a sense, behaved correctly. Undoubtedly, someone will come up with horror stories about the Syrians, but on the most part they behaved correctly except for occasional looting. The Syrians did sponsor militia groups, one of which was named the "Red Tigers". They behaved badly; they were thugs who carried out acts of violence on behalf of the Syrians. The other group was the PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army) which some people confused with the PLO, although they were entirely different. The PLA were Palestinian units which were organized by the Syrians and were completely under Syrian control. They were not part of the PLO. Someone described them as the "dregs of the camps".

All the petty rackets, all the thieving was done by these groups. The Syrians were great looters. When it comes to looting, these armies and groups were absolutely shameless. The Israelis were the same; they and the Syrians would take anything they could. They would fill truck loads; it was all well organized. They would go through houses and strip them bare and ship the goods off to Syria or Israel. They were both absolutely shameless. The only difference was that in the Syrian case, their officers were directly engaged in this looting while in the Israeli case, their officers tolerated it. They turned their backs and had no sense of responsibilities. The Israeli army had lousy discipline. The myth of the new Prussians is wrong. It may be that in certain combat situations the lack of discipline is good in the sense that you get greater risk taking and more initiative by junior officers, but in other situations the lack of discipline is bad. They casually kill a

lot of people in a place like Lebanon. There is no fire discipline, no attempt to really control their troops. The troops loot; they are slovenly; they aren't very impressive when you are living cheek-to-jowl with them.

The Syrians were engaged in stealing in Lebanon. There were Syrian officers who, I was told, were very concerned about the damage this looting was doing to their own army. I am not suggesting that they were nice guys, but that they apparently were concerned with what happens to a military organization when it becomes corrupted by stealing.

I was told that there were Syrian officers who felt the Syrian Army should leave Lebanon to save itself. Its presence in Lebanon allowed them to steal and loot. Life is different and looser in Lebanon; there are women available in Lebanon who are not available in Syria. All of these factors matter. As in some American occupations, there is an incentive for troops to stay in occupied territory. After all, Syria is a fairly austere society -- heavily Muslim. For the Syrian troops, therefore, a tour in Lebanon, with its very limited restraints, was an opportunity in a lot of ways and some of the troops enjoyed their stay. They certainly didn't cover themselves with glory.

We had liaison with the Syrians through a Lebanese officer, Sami Khatib, who is still around. He was then a brigadier general; he probably has another star or two by now. The Syrians were in Lebanon as a peace-keeping force. We didn't directly talk to Syrian officers, who were obviously under orders to avoid Americans. So we dealt through the Lebanese middle-man which for many purposes was quite effective. Sami Khatib was not a boob. He was effective on many things.

The PLA tried to kill our Army Attaché, whom I liked a lot. He was on his way to my house in a jeep; he had to cross a check-point controlled by the PLA. There they opened fire on him, knowing full well who he was. He was wounded even though the armored wind-shield held up. A couple of bullets came through a side window and grazed his head. It was not a serious wound, but he did have blood all over his face. He drove to the hospital and then to my house and I went out to look at the jeep. There were bullet marks all over the jeep. It was clear that there had been an assassination attempt. I got so angry about this that I jumped into my car and went straight to Syrian headquarters because they controlled the PLA. They seemed astounded. Here was the American Ambassador walking into Syrian headquarters demanding to see the commander. He couldn't be found, but the Syrians were obviously disconcerted. I wanted to confront him while I was still angry although I am not sure what I would have done. I stayed in the headquarters for fifteen-twenty minutes. It was obviously a foolish gesture, but I was so irate that I didn't really stop to think. The Army Attaché stayed at our house for a few days recuperating. But I will never forget the sight of that shot-up jeep, which was well known in Beirut and could not have been mistaken for another one. I don't know why the PLA shot. Maybe it was a personal matter, maybe someone just felt like shooting at an American. Who knows?

Q: *Did we have relationships with Syria at the time?*

DILLON: Yes. Bob Paganelli, a very good officer, was our Ambassador.

Q: *Before we move on, I want to ask a question which happens to be timely in light of our prospective actions in Somalia. It is often said that "we don't want another Lebanon". Our*

Marines were in Beirut during your tour. They didn't seem to have a clear mission. Has anyone talked to you or any other Embassy staff member who was in Beirut at the time our Marines were there?

DILLON: No. I am sure there are people still working for the government who went through that experience. I think the two situations are very different. The reason the Marines went to Lebanon was because in the summer of 1982, Phil Habib negotiated, after the Israeli invasion and during the siege of Beirut, a withdrawal of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut. It was a tour-de-force, which I will always greatly admire. Phil's efforts were pursuant to U.S. policy which was to prevent the Israeli occupation of a major Arab city. We were afraid for many reasons of the consequences of an Israeli occupation. We didn't want the city destroyed more than it was. The idea of Israelis involved in house-to-house fighting inside Beirut was appalling. So there were a lot of reasons to keep the Israelis out of Beirut.

In the course of Habib's negotiations, it became absolutely clear that in order to achieve an evacuation, there would have to be a neutral presence to separate the combatants. The distrust on both sides was so massive that without such a neutral party, the withdrawal could not be achieved. It was an obvious job, in my view, for U.N. peace-keeping forces. I do not subscribe to the popular view that U.N. peace-keepers are ineffective; I have seen them in action in Southern Lebanon. With a properly formulated mission, the peace-keepers are very good and can handle the assignment. The Israelis absolutely refused to consider the U.N. because it is an article of faith in Israel that the U.N. is no good. If the U.N. were any good, there wouldn't have been the anti-Israeli resolutions and other actions that the Israelis considered one-sided. The second reason, I believe, was that the Israelis wanted American involvement. So they insisted that American forces be involved. Phil understood the dangers, but time was a problem. He immediately concluded -- he was probably right, although I might have held out a little more -- that there would have to be American participation. He went directly to the White House. Ronald Reagan agreed and the Marines were already in the Mediterranean -- a battalion landing team aboard U.S. ships sailing in that sea.

For my part, I would have to say that although I thought the job was a U.N. one and that we should have insisted on that, I have always viewed the Marines as a very disciplined force. So I saw some advantages to using Marines partly because the Marines are never used as a permanent occupation force. It was clear that they would not remain permanently. Furthermore, we needed a highly disciplined force at that stage, particularly when it came to the use of fire-power. So the Marines landed as part of a multi-national force which included Italians and French and later a small squadron of British motorized cavalry from Cyprus. This force was there essentially to supervise the departure of the PLO fighters and to be a barrier between the warring factions. The Marines occupied and managed the port from where the PLO left. A lot of the difficult areas were assigned to the French. Perhaps most difficult job went to the Italians, who did very well. That doesn't quite fit the stereotype of the Italian Army, but they were quite good. Some of the PLO fighters went out on the Damascus road and that was quite tricky because there were many reports that the Lebanese Christian militia were waiting to attack. The Italians escorted the Palestinians out on that Damascus road. When the withdrawal was completed, the Marines were ordered back to their ships rather precipitously, partly because Secretary of Defense Weinberger had announced that action too soon, as far as I was concerned. The Marines were in Lebanon for no more than fifteen

days. There was a great sigh of relief when the operations were finished. If it had stopped there, it would have been alright. It must be noted that the Marines were sent to Lebanon for a very specific purpose. When it was achieved, that was fine and all the troops did a fine job. The French troops, who were Legionnaires, were a problem. They tended to be a little bit older and rougher. They didn't interact well with the local population. They are a bunch of tough guys. The Marines and the Italians, who were conscripts, were mostly teenagers. The typical Marine battalion tends to be a collection of high school football players. They are very nice guys. Their officers are very good; they are all very disciplined so that you don't get all the accidental killings as you did with the Legionnaires and the Israelis.

But what happened was that they came back without a mission and that was disastrous. Within a very few days of their first departure, the newly elected President of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel was assassinated (September 14). He was killed; the Israelis, who had promised to stay out of Beirut, immediately invaded to "restore order". That was just a pretext; there was no disorder. It was done over our protest. The Israelis cut off the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. As the world soon found out the Israeli army guarded the approaches to the camps. They shone spotlights on the camps while a group of Maronite militia entered the camps and murdered 1,500 people, I would guess. The Israeli reports indicated only 800 deaths, but I don't believe that; I think it was twice that. The Palestinians on their side used figures like 3,500 but I doubt whether it was that high.

The Americans were terribly embarrassed by this slaughter because the whole deal with the Palestinian leadership included solemn promises, bolstered by pledges from both the Maronite militia and the Israelis, that there would be no reprisals and no violence visited on the Palestinians civilians who remained behind after the withdrawal of the PLO forces. But those promises were broken quickly. In an almost knee-jerk reaction, the Marines were sent back in. I was not consulted on this at all. From then on, it was a process of finding a mission for them. Initially, there were no problems, but eventually the whole enterprise broke down. The operation as I have said was poorly conceived and defined. I don't think the Marines should have returned and certainly if they had to return, should have been in greater strength. There were only 1,400 lightly armed Marines; that is not many. The prestige of the United States and the prestige of the Marines is such that you can get away with a light presence for a short period of time, but after a while, that fades. The potential enemies are not stupid; they can count. After a while, they notice how few Marines there are and how lightly armed they are. They didn't have artillery which some of the Lebanese militia had.

Q: *Let me go back to a previous topic and that is the relationships between our Embassies in Syria and Lebanon. How did that work?*

DILLON: As I said before, Paganelli was an excellent Ambassador. He had a nice sense of humor, yet he was sort of austere and serious. He had had a lot of experience in the Arab area. He was very precise in his reporting. He was not a man who indulged in wishful thinking. Paganelli's importance was that, whenever there was wishful thinking about the Syrian role, he always disabused people, although neither he or his staff indicated any anti-Syrian biases. He just tried to explain the Syrian point of view as clearly as he could. If there were any misunderstandings about what the Syrians might do, it was not due to Paganelli's insights. He was a professional diplomat who believed that U.S.-Syrian relationships could be improved and that such improvements should be pursued. He felt that one of the U.S. objectives was to bring Syria out of its isolation.

Paganelli's contribution during this period was the constant reminder that Syrian policy in Lebanon had a certain logic, at least from their point of view. They had never accepted the break up of greater Syria. They believed that Lebanon really belonged to greater Syria. They also believed that the Christian militia, if left alone, would play an Israeli game and that the Syrian presence in Lebanon was to guard against such a turn of events. At the same time, they had a deep concern about uncontrolled Palestinian forces in Lebanon or indeed anywhere else in the area because they had the potential to start a major conflagration. That led the Syrians to wish to control PLO forces which of course gave rise to very poor relations with the Palestinians.

Paganelli was very good at reporting Syrian views to the degree that he certainly angered the Secretary of State who on occasion didn't want to hear those views. George Shultz really got mad at him. I am sure that Shultz would describe the matter differently, but I remember him coming to the area to be involved in the agreement to get the Israelis to withdraw from Lebanon. He was working under the assumption that the Syrians would do the same. That assumption rested on some words uttered by Assad many, many months before. It was clear to Paganelli, at least, that those words had been overtaken by events. He said that and concluded that there was no possibility that the Syrians would withdraw from Lebanon unless there was a complete Israeli withdrawal, which was not in the cards. So Shultz got upset with the messenger; he was prepared to fire Paganelli, but was finally talked out of it. Shultz was very good on many things, but the Middle East was not one of them.

It was nice having Paganelli in Damascus, because, compared to Lebanon, Syria was an oasis of serenity and it was very helpful to escape to Syria every once in a while for a day or two and stay at the Ambassador's residence to relax. That was very pleasant, as was walking through the bazaar.

Q: *Did you feel that your views were similar to those of other Ambassadors in the area? It was during this period that Ambassador Neumann, after only a short period, resigned from his post in Saudi Arabia because he felt that U.S. policy towards Israel was too subservient and too weak.*

DILLON: All of our Ambassadors felt that way. I think we were well represented in the area. We had Talcott Seelye in Damascus when I first got to Lebanon; he was replaced by another good Ambassador -- Paganelli; Dick Viets was our Ambassador in Jordan -- he was excellent. Both Paganelli and Viets had the virtue of fairly blunt honesty in their reporting. The temptation for American Ambassadors in that part of the world was to trim what they had to say because of the sensitivities back in Washington. You were rewarded if you were able to report things that bear out the preconception of the Washington staffs. What do people in Washington want to hear? They want to hear that they are doing the right thing; that the alliance with Israel made sense; that the strategic alliance was in our interest. So you were rewarded if you were able to adduce evidence that the Washington policies were correct. Neither Paganelli or Viets ever played that game.

Then we had Roy Atherton in Egypt, followed by Veliotes. They were very good. Brandon Grove was the Consul General in Jerusalem and he was very good. Sam Lewis had been in Israel for a long time. He was an outstanding Ambassador, but, in my view, had stayed in Israel too long. After a while, if you accept the basic assumptions of the country to which you are appointed, you also accept their point of view. I think Sam, who had been a very good Ambassador, by this time had

absorbed too much of the Israeli point of view. But, as I said, in many respects he was a good Ambassador.

I must say that I was very pleased with the quality of the people around us. In some of my very dark days, I especially appreciated the personal support I got from both Viets and Paganelli, who were wonderful. They were good professionally and also understood on a personal level some of the pressures I was under in Lebanon. They would periodically take the time and trouble to give us some support.

Q: *Let me move to the Fall of 1981. Beirut was being subjected to a series of Israeli bombings interspersed with firing from Israeli gun boats. Did the Lebanese government, to the extent that there was one, complain to you or did it use different channels?*

DILLON: The Lebanese government had mixed feelings. It was simultaneously anti-Israel, anti-Syria and anti-Palestinian. I am referring to the Sarkis government. It was in a very weak position. Lebanon was surrounded by these forces. That government played its cards with some skills, even though, as I said, it held a very weak hand. The Foreign Minister, Fouad Boutros, was a brilliant man. The other powerful member of the team was Johnny Abdu.

Those three men were together constantly. I met with them many, many times. We became friends, which always happens, of course. I saw a lot of them and came to respect all three. Sarkis was viewed, particularly by the militant Christian right, as "weak". There were always complaints that he was "weak". That was not realistic. Sarkis wasn't "weak"; Lebanon was immensely "weak". Sarkis had very few options. He had an Army that he was trying to keep together, which he did with some success. The Army was the only institution in which Muslims and Christians cooperated. I thought he dealt skillfully with the Syrians. The idea that he was "pro-Syrian", as some of the right wing Maronites proclaimed, was nonsense. Sarkis was a Maronite himself. He was a smart, realistic man trying to deal with the consequences of the Syrian presence. He was concerned about the involvement of right wing Maronite groups with the Israelis. One has to be careful how one describes that. From Sarkis' point of view, there were times when that relationship was useful to him; it helped him to balance other forces. On the other hand, he also saw it as very dangerous. He maneuvered back and forth between the Syrians on one side and the Israelis on the other. Then there was the PLO, particularly in Beirut and in the northern part of southern Lebanon, which was very strong. So he had to contend with a lot of groups. It was important to achieve a certain balance. Fouad Boutros, who was perhaps his chief advisor in the maneuvering, was a thoroughly decent man, whom I liked very much, and a brilliant one. He was a classic diplomatic chess player; very good at leaning one way or the other.

Johnny Abdu was the action man. He did a lot of things, some perhaps not very nice. He collected information. He had a massive telephone tapping operation and constantly fed information to Sarkis. Johnny had his detractors. I must say that I enjoyed my dealings with him very much. He was smart, witty, an absolutely dedicated Lebanese -- that is important. Most Lebanese have very little loyalty to the concept of a united country. But a few people had the vision of whole Lebanon. They did see that Lebanon had to build on Christian-Muslim cooperation, not domination by one side or the other. So we had the interesting picture of Johnny Abdu, a tough little character who is running the Duxieme Bureau, who had a vision of Muslim-Christian cooperation and did

understand that, although himself a Maronite, a totally Maronite dominated state could not survive. He probably thought that if the Maronites were clever and smart enough, they would not have to surrender much power, but it was impossible that they, as a minority, could continue to dominate the country completely. Interestingly, Sarkis used Johnny for many of his clandestine contacts with the Muslims. Johnny was trusted because they knew that he played it straight. If he came to them and said that the President has said so and so, that was truth. Johnny would not play games. They also knew that he could be trusted to report faithfully to Sarkis. Despite the fact that at one level, Johnny was a PLO foe -- he was responsible for keeping them in check -- Sarkis used him as the contact man and that was successful.

I am trying to paint a picture of a very weak Lebanese government, whose writ did not run far in any direction outside of Baabda, which was the capital. Sarkis maneuvered with a great deal of skill among all the various factions. He and Abdu, both Maronites, understood well the unrealism displayed by their friends and in some cases, their relatives who believed strongly that Lebanon had do be ruled by Maronites. Boutros was a Greek Orthodox. I mention the religion of the various leaders because it is very important in the Lebanese context. The Orthodox always felt far more Arab than the Maronites, even through they were Christians with all that implies in the Middle East including some feeling of superiority over other people. As a group, the Orthodox tended to be far more realistic in their dealings with the other Arabs, and they tended not to be Francophiles as the Maronites were.

So the three leaders maneuvered back and forth. The usual concept of someone being pro or anti-Israel, pro or anti-Syrian, pro or anti-American didn't make any sense in that context. What we had was smart people who were trying to balance a variety of forces as best they could. Did they like Israel? No, they didn't. Did they think that our Israeli policy made any sense? No, they didn't think it made any sense. They thought we had gotten ourselves very foolishly in a situation which was not likely to give the U.S. any benefits and indeed they felt that the underlying problem in the area was the presence of Israel and its expansionist policy. They were quite frank about that view, but were quite prepared when the opportunity arose to use Israel as a foil to PLO or the Syrians or other forces.

None of these three Lebanese leaders was pro-Syrian. They were "anti-Syrian"; they mistrusted Syria. Historically, there had been some enthusiasm in Lebanon for the concept of a "greater Syria". There was a political party, the PPS, which was Greek Orthodox dominated, which was devoted to the idea of a "greater Syria". I honestly think that by the time I got to Lebanon that probably the sentiment within Lebanon for a "greater Syria" was minuscule. There may have been a handful of individuals who still believed in it, but I never met a Muslim Lebanese whom I would have described as pro-Syrian. The Maronites of course were very anti-Syrian, with the exception of the Franjieh group. Among the Sunni establishment -- the wealthy Sunnis who lived principally in Tripoli, Beirut and Saida -- I never detected any pro-Syrian sentiment. I did meet Sunnis who had a feeling for a greater Sunni Arab world of which they would have been a part, but at the same time, they distrusted Assad whose government was Alawites, which was a religious off-shoot of the Shiites. They lived mainly in northern Syria on the Turkish border. Many of the Arabs in southern Turkey are also Alawites. I have been told that Assad has relatives in Turkey.

The Alawites were about 10% of the Syrian population; yet they dominated Syria. Syria is 70%

Sunni; the other 30% is divided, including a fair number of Christians. Generally, the Assad government had the support of the non-Sunni groups because they feared Sunni-domination. That is a great over-simplification of a complicated situation, but it is worth noting because you shouldn't be surprised when I refer to Muslims in Lebanon, I refer primarily to the Sunni establishment, which was not pro-Syrian. The Syrians were important to them only as a counter-weight to the Maronites or the Israelis. They did take their ties to Syria very seriously, but were not pro-Syrian.

The Shiites were the down-trodden. They were the largest single group; certainly a plurality at the time I was there and probably in the majority by now. They were not pro-Syrian, even though you may hear some Shiite leaders described occasionally as pro-Syrian which simply meant that they had some connections with Damascus and may have had some support from there. But the Shiites were not interested in being part of a "greater Syria" dominated by Alawites. The important thing is for Americans to understand that in Washington, partly because of the desperate need to rationalize the policy built on an alliance with Israel, vast oversimplification and misunderstandings of these relationships were very common. Some officials sitting in Washington liked to hear that in Lebanon many Christians were "pro-Israel" or that some of the terrible Muslims were "pro-Syria" and therefore untrustworthy. This fitted their preconceptions. None of that made any sense in the Lebanon context. The people there related to each other in many different ways. I would also argue that the general view was that the Israelis were the outsiders who had no business being there, even though any one Lebanese faction was readily prepared to use the Israelis against other factions they considered as enemies. American officials were dealing with Lebanese who on occasion gave the impression of being "pro-Israel"; they were not, and the Americans should not have interpreted the situation in that way. These were essentially tactical ploys by Lebanese to get on the "right side" of the Americans. They understood our hang-ups.

Q: *Let me ask you about that. Were you getting many visitors: press, Congressional, etc? Were you giving them the analysis which you are giving us now and if so, how was it received?*

DILLON: Yes to both questions. We did have a lot of visitors. We gave them as dispassionate a view of the situation as we could. Normally, either I or the chief of the Political Section, Ryan Crocker, who is now back in Lebanon as the Ambassador, did the briefing. He was a brilliant political officer. I would hope that our presentations then were a little more organized than what I am doing now, ten years later. To a large degree, I think our audiences found us credible, even those Congressmen who bothered to listen. We were not trying to sell something. We were trying to demonstrate to people that the problems in Lebanon -- indeed the problems in the Middle East -- were very complicated and inter-locking. That had to be understood. Simplistic views, including the one that held that Israel was a "strategic asset" for the U.S. in the area, were wrong. To that degree, we were certainly running against U.S. policy because Al Haig had come to office with the strong belief that Israel was a strategic asset. Haig was not a stupid man at all, but his point of view was that the central problem was the contest with the Soviet Union -- the East-West confrontation. He and his closest advisors saw the Middle East in that context and therefore Israel looked like a strong point. When you have this view -- that the Soviet Union was the over-riding problem -- it is very easy to fall into the idea, as many of them did, that whatever is happening in the area somehow involved the Russians.

There were members of the Reagan administration who believed that Lebanese events were driven by Soviet efforts. It was a very skewed view. The Soviets were not out to do us any favors and indeed didn't, and their role as arms suppliers to the Syrians was a mischievous one, but they had no control over the important terrorist groups. I confess that I am a regionalist. The regionalists were people who believed that the Middle East problems and indeed most of the problems we dealt with were "home-grown" and must be viewed as part of the dynamics of the people living in the area -- the clash of interests. Sometimes the animosities went back very far. Only very, very peripherally, were the problems the results of East-west tensions. Occasionally the Russians did get involved as we did and sometimes successfully exploit and manipulate forces, but essentially the issue had to be viewed as area based. The problem with Washington in those days was that it was dominated by people who did not accept my point of view. They viewed the world through the White House ideological prism.

Q: *You are referring to the Reagan White House. Wasn't that view just an extension of the Nixon-Kissinger perceptions?*

DILLON: Quite right. It may have had marginally more validity twenty five years ago than it did in the 1980s. I must hedge a little bit because I can not flatly say that the Reagan view always had no validity. One can find instances of French or American or Soviet involvement in various ways, but what was going on in Lebanon was home-grown and had to be understood in those terms. The Lebanese didn't necessarily believe that. That was part of their unrealism; they found it very easy to blame outside powers for their internal struggles. In any case, I didn't give much credit to the theory of outside power intervention. Subsequent history proved that we were right. One of the points we wanted to make to visitors, which brought us into conflict with prevailing view in Washington, was that events in Lebanon could not be seen as part of the East-West struggle. People didn't want to hear that because in part our position was an attack on a very pro-Israeli policy. If you couldn't view Lebanon or the Middle East in East-West terms, then you would be forced back to an "even-handed" policy which in those days was a "dirty" phrase because somehow it became a euphemism for being pro-Arab. We were not pro-Arab; we were not pro-Israel; we were not pro-anything, except very pro-American. We were very assiduous in looking after American interests. We were very cautious about American involvement. I have never gone back and looked at our reporting. When I do, I will probably be surprised at some of the things we said; some of it will certainly seem nonsense, but over-all the thrust of our reporting was that the Lebanese problems were home-grown and difficult to deal with. We undoubtedly stated that the Israeli presence in Lebanon contributes to the instability and doesn't assist a solution.

In the aftermath of the Israeli invasion, all of us felt that, although the problems would not be solved, it did provide an opportunity to ameliorate the problems. The key was a full and clean Israeli withdrawal accompanied by a full and clean Syrian withdrawal. The Israelis were absolutely not interested in a full and clean withdrawal. I mentioned that Shultz was very angry at Paganelli. The blind spot in the anger was the Shultz failure to realize that the only possible way of getting the Syrians out was a complete Israeli withdrawal. Because Shultz and the people around him were more attuned to political "realities" in Israel -- even if they didn't like them -- they accepted the Israeli position that a full withdrawal was just not possible. But they could not understand or accept the Syrian position which was that they couldn't withdraw either.

Q: *Of course, it must be recognized that Israel had an open society with a free press, except that it could not cover certain events such as the invasion. We had a very articulate, aggressive Israeli lobby, not necessarily consisting of all Jews, but including other groups such as the Christian fundamentalist. Israel had been conceived as our ally for so long that we knew all about Israel and what was going on in that country.*

DILLON: And we had a forceful and articulate American Ambassador in Israel who both understood and enjoyed the interesting political scene in Israel. Americans do understand that kind of thing. So when Sam Lewis would say: "Here is the political reality of Israel" and would discuss the Israeli right-wing and the whole gamut of interesting juxtapositions of groups, he and his staff were understood when they reported that the government of Israel was constrained from taking certain steps. That situation was understood in Washington, but when you tried to explain it in Lebanon and even more so, in Syria, it was not understood. The assumption was that Assad could do any damn thing he pleased; that of course was not realistic. He is not subject to the same political considerations as the Israelis; he was not subject to the clash of parties; public opinion played a different role. But here was guy who dominated a country, not simply by force as Americans imagined, but by very clever manipulation of political forces within his country. He is a member of a 10% minority so that he didn't have a free hand. But when you stand up and say that, you are immediately labeled as an apologist for the Syrian. But if you stand up and talk about the political realities and forces in Israel, you are not labeled as an apologist for the Israelis.

Q: *You are now talking about the heart of our Foreign Service career. We came in the 50s and left in the 80s. We have lived through this relationship with Israel which basically the Foreign Service, looking at it objectively and not with a racist or prejudiced point of view, found very difficult to support. Yet we have had to live with that -- most of us from afar, but when you are right in the midst of it, you can tell it as it is, but it doesn't really take.*

DILLON: No, it didn't and doesn't. It didn't take, although I think it takes more now than it used to.

Q: *Can we move on from the end of 1981 to the time the invasion took place in June, 1982. What was the situation like in that period?*

DILLON: In the Fall of 1981, there were armed clashes which I think I have already mentioned. Phil Habib's mission was, at least initially, to get Syrian agreement to withdraw their SAMs out of the Bekaa Valley. His headquarters were in my residence. He shuttled back and forth between Lebanon, Israel and Syria. There comes, of course, the time when one can no longer determine who is retaliating against whom. The cycle of violence becomes so ingrained that everyone is retaliating for something someone else has done. The question is how it is done. The Palestinian retaliation was pretty weak stuff because they were feeble. The Israeli retaliations were through shelling from the gunboats off the coast and air strikes which are far more destructive on the ground in terms of human costs than what the Palestinians were doing. Both sides had an awful righteousness about what they were doing. That was one of the reasons that they were all exasperating to deal with. The idea that all Arabs and Israelis were cynical was easy to believe, but in fact, most are just damned self-righteous. They each believe that their case is so self-evidently correct that if one does not accept it, there is something wrong with you, not them. So when you get caught in between as an American, you find you are surprised that both Arabs and Israelis are

intensely hostile to you because each side believes that it is so self-evident that it is right; each sees itself as the victim and the aggrieved. The idea that an American can have a "balanced" view is almost immoral in their eyes. You do get that feeling in dealing with Palestinians and certainly with Israelis.

That was the attitude that Habib was dealing with. He finally worked out a cease-fire sometime in the fall, 1981. From then on, the cease-fire held partly because the Palestinians were in a weak position and with the exception of few extremist groups, it was very much in their interest to stick to the cease-fire. The Israelis were, I think it is fair to say, always tempted to break it because if you are in a strong position you are less interested in a cease-fire. When people write revisionist history, it is worth examining when they say that the "stronger" of the two parties was forced to violate a cease-fire because of the actions of the "weaker" party. It usually doesn't happen that way. It is usually the "weaker" party that wants to maintain a cease-fire. In fact the PLO wanted the cease-fire and it stuck with it to the maximum degree possible. They enforced discipline on their people.

Eleven months of essentially unbroken cease-fire went by. Then the Israelis unilaterally announced that the cease-fire applied not only for southern Lebanon, but it applied world-wide. That was not true. What broke the cease-fire in Israeli eyes was the assassination attempt on the Israeli Ambassador in London in June, 1982. He lived, but I think was crippled for life. The fact that the Ambassador didn't die was only a miracle; the bullets lodged in the spine and he never walked again. The attempt was the work of the Abu Nidal group, which was an independent terrorist group and very anti-PLO. Abu Nidal, as a matter of fact, was under death sentence by the PLO for assassinations of moderate Palestinians.

The Israelis retaliated by bombing in Lebanon. The Palestinians retaliated by firing some rockets into northern Israel. The Israelis bombed again and then invaded Lebanon in massive strength. I did not realize fully at the time how public the preparations for the invasion had been in Israel. I have to say that I don't understand why the Americans in Israel did not report more on those preparations. Inside Lebanon, we had many, many reports that the invasion was coming. There was constant apprehension on part of Lebanese and Palestinians. They would talk to us and we would duly report these conversations. From Washington's point of view, clearly Palestinian or Shiite warnings about an imminent Israeli invasion was seen as self-serving. So I didn't expect a report from Lebanon that "they are coming" to be accepted as fact, but I do not understand why there wasn't better reporting on the preparations out of Israel.

There were constant reports from Israel of Palestinian build-up. It is very hard to prove the negative. If there are reports of Libyan-supplied heavy artillery in southern Lebanon, you can be sure that the source was Israel. And we "looked into" those reports. It was very difficult to prove that the artillery was not there. One can't really be sure. We, CIA and the military attachés, could only say that we couldn't prove that the pieces were there or not, only that we saw no evidence of their presence. You can see how weak an analysis that was compared to an Israeli military intelligence briefer saying with certainty that pieces were located here and there. Then there were we Americans in Lebanon, who were suspect anyhow because some felt that we had probably sold out to the Arabs, saying that we couldn't say definitely whether the artillery was there or not; we just had no evidence of its presence. We did know that there were rockets.

In retrospect, I can say that there were no secrets in Lebanon. It was almost impossible to hide anything. I wish we had been more forceful than we were. In truth, if there had been artillery in southern Lebanon, we would have known it. It wasn't there. In retrospect, the "presence" of the artillery was clearly a propaganda build-up to justify an invasion which had been decided for domestic political purposes in Israel.

There were people in Israel who saw an opportunity to remake the political map of the Middle East. They saw a chance to convert weak Lebanon on their northern border into a Christian led client state, dependent on them. They were conspiring with the Lebanese Forces, led by my friend Bashir Gemayel. There was a propaganda build up leading up to the invasion. As I mentioned earlier, Bashir Gemayel and I had become quite friendly. He was the youngest son of Pierre Gemayel who was the head of the Phalange party. His elder brother was Amin Gemayel who later became President of Lebanon. Bashir was a man who had been a guerrilla fighter since he was 14 years old; he had been a successful fighter. He then headed the strongest Maronite militia, which wiped out the other Maronite militias. He had treated the other Maronite militias as brutally as he treated Palestinians or any other group that got in his way. Bashir was in his early 30s when I first came to know him. He was just beginning to transit from a guerrilla leader to a politician, which was an old metamorphosis in many countries, including Israel. When he came to see me, we enjoyed bantering, but I also gave him serious advice. I was concerned about his relationship with Israel because I saw in Bashir a potential leader for all of Lebanon. It would have been impossible to be the leader of all of Lebanon and an Israeli agent at the same time and I suspected he was the latter. It turned out later that I was right.

Bashir became fond of me. We became friends. I think he knew I was honest with him. He was curious about the United States; he was curious about American intentions; he was curious about American policy. He understood how painful it was for me to be completely honest and realistic with him, particularly about what he might or what he might not expect from the United States on certain issues.

One evening, in the late Spring, he came to me at a time when there were many, many stories about the coming Israeli invasion. There were just the two of us. We sat down and he looked at me and said, rather formally: " Ambassador, you know they are really coming". I asked him what he meant. "Look, the Israelis are really coming", he replied. What I realized at that moment was that he was in on it. He felt a compulsion to be in a position of not having lied to me. I am sure that is what happened. We had had an open and frank relationship which he had come to appreciate. He did not want to be in a position of having lied to me. I reported our conversation to Washington. I even talked to Nick Veliotes, the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, on the secure phone. I told him what had happened. I knew that Nick would understand the circumstances and the reasons for Bashir's comments. You would have to ask Nick what was going on in Washington at the time, but I don't think that the leadership thought the invasion would take place. The reporting out of Lebanon was viewed as Palestinians just "crying wolf", even though Bashir was certainly not a Palestinian.

This is all part of the question whether General Sharon was given a "green" light by Al Haig. I don't believe he was. I believe Haig when he denies it, even though in Israel everybody believes

that Sharon was given the "OK" signal. Sharon came to Washington in May, 1982 and in effect described an invasion plan. According to the public record, Haig very carefully told him that Israel couldn't do anything like that on a flimsy pretext. He wanted to make it clear that if they just drummed up a pretext for an invasion, the United States would be opposed. I have talked to a person who was sitting at Haig's right hand during the talks with Sharon. So I have a pretty good idea of what went on. There was some more back and forth between Haig and Sharon. Then Sharon left and Haig's staff said to him that he had in effect given Sharon a "green" light. Haig denied it. I am told that Haig was then told: " Secretary, Sharon just left here believing that if he invades Lebanon, the United States will not oppose him". Haig said that had not been his purpose. A letter was then drafted from Haig to Sharon presumably to clarify our position and to make it clear that in fact the United States was opposed to an invasion of Lebanon. But Sharon already had his answer. Americans sometimes don't understand this. Sharon didn't care whether Americans approved or disapproved of whatever he wanted to do. He just wanted to know whether the U.S. would take any punitive action. He had sat and looked at the Secretary, who was a distinguished military officer himself, and immediately understood that the Americans were not going to take any action if Israel were to invade Lebanon. He saw that there would be no political costs to Israel. And that is the message that Sharon got during his meeting with Haig. The question was not whether the United States would approve of the invasion -- Sharon knew that couldn't be the case. But he wanted to know whether we would either try to stop it or take punitive action afterwards. He concluded that there would be none. If the United States wants to do anything about prevention, whether it be with the Greeks or the Israelis or the Palestinians or anyone else, you have to grab the other guy by the collar and shake him and say: "God damn it, we are opposed! You must understand that there will be consequences. You can not do what you have in mind with impunity; there will be some cost to you!". That would have been the only way to deal with the Israelis; we didn't do it and that makes me very angry.

Afterwards, of course, we were all sitting around wondering how it all happened. We all agreed that the invasion was not in U.S. interests; it harmed those interests. The President of the U.S. came to that conclusion. In fact, by now, even the majority of the Israelis have come to the conclusion that invasion was not in their interest. And that goes beyond the 650 or so Israelis that were killed in the venture. There are times when you must be very, very direct in dealing with people and we are not. We are therefore constantly being surprised when others do outrageous things -- as recently illustrated by the 1991 Iraq invasion of Kuwait.

Q: *I would like to pursue this issue of warning. In diplomacy, you normally understate matters. There have been rare occasions when diplomats have threatened, but it is not in the nature of the business to do so.*

DILLON: In this particular case, we had two experienced officials dealing with each other. They understood each other. There was a whole history of relationships that both understood. I found a similar problem with my own staffs and other senior Foreign Service officers with whom I have dealt over the years. We understood each other; we didn't have to spell things out. In my present job, in dealing with my staff, I now understand that this doesn't happen all the time. I now have to be very direct and clear. In dealing with General Sharon, with Saddam Hussein, you can't be subtle. You have to be very clear and direct. If you are not, it will be misinterpreted. Their only concern is for the consequences. Sharon was a criminal, even if he was a brilliant soldier. He was a

thoroughly dishonest man; he was an ambitious politician and a lousy human being. He didn't give a damn whether nice people like us approved or disapproved of his butchering several thousand people. What he wanted to know was whether there would be any cost involved. So you have to be perfectly clear when dealing with people like that. They have to know that there would be consequences. You may be constrained in saying what those consequences might be although the clearer you are on what the cost might be, the better, but that may not be possible under all circumstances. But that there would be consequences has to be said. That was the problem with our dialogue with Saddam Hussein. There was a failure on our part to make clear that he would have to bear some cost if he invaded Kuwait.

I think Saddam Hussein was shocked when we reacted as we did. I don't think it ever occurred to him that there would be serious cost for his actions.

Q: *The invasion occurred on June 6, 1982. Were you just waiting for the "shoe to drop" at this point?*

DILLON: Yes. The Israelis invaded and immediately announced that they would "drive the Palestinian artillery back from the border" where it was a threat to Israel. This rang false with us because we didn't really believe that there was artillery in southern Lebanon although we couldn't be certain. There may have been a gun someplace. Our military attaché, who couldn't get anybody to really pay any attention to him -- he would submit lots of reports, but nobody in Washington really cared about them -- immediately noticed that the Israelis were using too much strength for the limited purposes they had announced. The attaché said that it was not a border foray; he predicted that there was something more than just moving a few artillery pieces back 25 miles. The Israelis kept coming. The Syrian air force rose to meet them and was destroyed in two days -- they lost something like 85 airplanes. The Israelis lost one plane. Some people were of course delighted by the evidence that American weapons were so far better than the third rate stuff that Syrians had gotten from the Soviets.

The Israelis kept coming. The Palestinians chose to fight at Saida at a place called Ain El Hilweh, which was the largest refugee camp. They fought and held up the Israelis for several days. Eventually, the Israelis leveled Ain El Hilweh; then moved north and killed a lot of civilians in their advance. They used tanks and heavy weapons. My recollection is that they divided into two or three columns, one of which smashed up the coast through Ain El Hilweh and Damour. The column moved to Beirut. One other column was in the Bekaa Valley going though the mountain passes. The Syrians fought surprisingly well, but were eventually overwhelmed by superior numbers and equipment and indeed by better tactical leadership. On the tactical level, the Israelis were very good. It is at other levels that one can fault them.

In the midst of this, we were sitting in Beirut and reporting what we could see. It became clear to us that a full scale invasion was taking place. I thought that Beirut was the objective, even though the Israelis were still claiming that they were interested only in the 40 kilometers north of their borders. But they were already well beyond that line and not with just a few patrols. They were into mid-Lebanon in strength. It was at this time that Begin sent a reassuring message to Reagan asserting that the Israeli action was intended solely to move the artillery back. That was clearly a lie. We in Lebanon called it a lie in polite language. It was clearly not what was happening.

Q: *In retrospect, could you have just said: "The Prime Minister of Israel has lied"? Could you have just started a telegram with those words? Would it have gained some attention that way?*

DILLON: We probably should have done it that way, but such a phrase was just not in our vocabulary. I don't think we were ever that sharp, but we did note that the Israelis were going far beyond what they said. We evacuated our dependents. There were civilian planes trapped at Beirut airport. The Israelis were bombing and strafing around the airport. There were four or five or perhaps even six foreign airliners trapped at the airport. Fortunately none were hit. We got the Israelis to agree to a cease-fire of one hour for the airfield so that our dependents, including my wife, could be flown out. So we hustled everyone to the airport in busses. Then the pilots wouldn't believe that the Israelis would keep the cease-fire. So we had a big argument with the pilots. They delayed taking off, by which time the hour had passed and the Israelis resumed their military activity. So we had to go back to the Israelis to plead for another cease-fire, which we finally got. Then we had another argument with the pilots who were still skeptical. The planes finally took off. The last one -- a British airliner -- bearing my wife, took off and as the plane taxied to the end of the runway for take off, the Israelis resumed their bombing and strafing. The plane took off nevertheless and Sue got to London safely, after leaving Lebanon during a bombing raid.

Q: *What were the Israelis bombing and strafing?*

DILLON: That is a good question. The Israelis were always obsessed with Beirut airport. It was such a symbol of Lebanese independence. They had raided that field with helicopters and commandoes in the past. At the end of the runway, there were Shiite and PLO positions which had light aircraft guns in them. They were totally ineffective. I suppose that was their target. But it was undoubtedly partly intimidation to assert to Lebanon that it was trapped because the large international airport was no longer useable. So it was a psychological as well as a military operation.

So the dependents left. As the Ambassador, I didn't do a lot of traveling around. My staff did most of that; I tried to be the quarterback sitting in the center of the situation. The Israelis continued their march northward; they had entered the southern part of Beirut still maintaining that their action was still only an "incursion" and that they would withdraw to Israel in the near future. We didn't believe them. The PLO was withdrawing into the city, setting up defenses there.

I stayed in my house, as I mentioned, which was in the hills, not far from Babda where the Presidential Palace was. There is a road which passed my house. One day, on that road, about 1/2 mile from my house, we could see an Israeli tank column advancing. We immediately reported that to the Operations Center of the Department. The answer was: "Well, we have assurances from Tel Aviv that the Israelis are still well south of Beirut". So I repeated again that I could see the tanks from my house -- north-east of Beirut -- and they were moving towards the city. The Operations Center just wouldn't believe me. Finally I said: "God damn it, this is the American Ambassador. Tel Aviv is lying to you. Doesn't anybody care back there?". There was a moment of silence and then a plaintive woman's voice said: "I care, Ambassador". I was touched and gratified. There was at least one person who cared. The Israelis were lying. But when you reported from Lebanon about Israeli actions, Washington called Tel Aviv to check our observations. The Israelis

denied and Washington believed them, even though the American Ambassador was reporting that he was seeing the tanks and the self-propelled artillery.

The Israelis had a great sense of humor. They stuck the tanks and the artillery all around my house and then proceeded to shell Beirut from there. That had two effects: one, it annoyed the American Ambassador, whom they disliked in any case and second, when the Palestinians retaliated, they had to fire in the direction of the American Ambassador's house. Some Israeli officers showed up to pay a call on me; I refused to receive them. I was later told that that was very impolite of me. It wasn't; I was accredited to Lebanon and I didn't have any business receiving the officers of an invading army. What they clearly expected to do was to use my house as sort of a headquarters, which I of course refused.

The siege of Beirut lasted something like 50 days -- it seemed forever. We were holed up in the house surrounded by Israelis. The siege was savage. Our military observers counted on some days that 8,000 rounds of artillery were fired by the Israelis on a limited area of Beirut. Occasionally, the newspapers reported rocket and artillery "duels". Rocket and artillery "duels" consisted of Israeli rounds -- a lot of 155 millimeters which are large shells -- going into the city and every once in a while some Palestinian popping out of a hole with a hand launcher, firing a rocket. The only thing that the Palestinians ever hit was the air conditioner of my house. That was not funny; there were about thirty people living in the house by that time. That was the "duel". I should also note that what thirty people do to plumbing is no joke, particularly in the middle of a hot, hot Mediterranean summer. We were living cheek by jowl without air conditioning. It was no lark.

Phil Habib was also living in the house. So he and we were reporting at the same time. His mission got more attention than we did. There was a famous incident I should mention. A cease-fire had been declared and Habib was on the phone back to Washington reporting that the Israelis had broken it and were firing into Beirut. He got the same answer that I got. Washington said: "Ambassador Habib, we have been in touch with Tel Aviv and are assured that the cease-fire is holding. The Israelis are denying that there is any firing". Habib then stuck the phone out of the window just as two tanks fired, with a huge amount of noise. That was a famous story, which was reported in Israel, although there, I was mentioned as the person on the phone. Sharon then made a statement to the press, outraged at me, attacking me for my non-professionalism as someone who stuck a telephone out of a window believing that anyone could tell one explosion from another. He then said that if I had been one of his junior officers, he would have fired me.

There were numerous cease-fires. They were all violated -- all by the Israelis. The Palestinians were in such a weak position that they desperately wanted the cease-fires so that they could pump water up to their shelters, carry the wounded out, etc. They wanted some respite. The Israelis didn't want cease-fires because they wanted to keep the pressure on.

Q: *What did you think the Israelis were trying to accomplish?*

DILLON: They were trying to kill as many PLO as possible. They spent a lot of time trying to kill Arafat, the head of the PLO. They had agents in the city and whenever they had Arafat spotted, whether there was a cease-fire or not, they would zero in on him. Several times, they would initiate air-strikes on apartment buildings that he just left. Arafat moved from place to place throughout

this time. In the meantime, we, the Americans, were the go-between trying to negotiate a cease-fire and an evacuation. Habib handled most of that. The interlocutor with the Palestinians, in most cases, was Wazan, who was the Prime Minister and a Sunni. Habib, assisted by Morris Draper, went back and forth to arrange the cease-fire and the evacuation. He did a magnificent job; he was good. He got fairly good agreement, but there were problems left. Where would the PLO go, which was a perfect illustration of the Palestinian problem because they have no place to go. The PLO agreed to evacuate if we could find some place for them to go. Of course, every Arab government said "No, we won't take them". There were 13-17,000 PLO fighters. The U.S. put massive pressure on the Tunisians, who finally agreed to take the bulk of the fighters. Then others agreed to take a few. Syria took some; Jordan took some; Sudan took some. So a cease-fire was arranged.

Just before the end, I was in the library in my house, which had become one of two command centers -- the other was upstairs where we had all of our communications. I was there with Habib and Bashir Gemayel and Wazan, the Prime Minister. Bashir had just given his personal guarantee to Habib that if the Palestinians fighters left, no action would be taken against the remaining Palestinians. Phil, in turn, had gotten assurances from the Israelis that they would not enter Beirut, once the fighters had evacuated and that they would not take any reprisals against the remaining Palestinians. Wazan was the interlocutor with the PLO; we were still maintaining the fiction, except for my "security" contact, that we didn't deal directly with the PLO. So we were all listening in as Wazan on a speaker phone was trying to convince a frantic Arafat, who was really concerned, that the remaining civilians would not be harmed. Arafat finally agreed to evacuate.

Immediately thereafter, the Marines landed along with the other multi-national forces. The evacuation proceeded. There were dramatic scenes at the dock as the Palestinian men left their wives and children behind. People were crying; there was great sorrow. Guns were being shot in the air. In typical Arab fashion, the PLO declared victory because they all lived to fight another day. A fine job was done by all and the multi-national force withdrew.

One reason I and my staff were so bothered by the Sabra-Shatila massacre is because we were present when Arafat, clearly very concerned about the fate of the Palestinians who were going to be left behind, was being given assurances that the women, children and old people would not be harmed. And they were butchered.

Q: *What were you doing as the PLO fighters pulled out?*

DILLON: The Israelis were all around Beirut and had been creeping into the city. There was no American Embassy at the time in the city. The Embassy in effect was in my house. By this time, the house was behind Israeli lines. There were Israeli artillery positions almost besides the house as I mentioned earlier. The Lebanese forces -- the Maronite militia -- was in the area but had declined to join in the fighting. The Israelis were very disappointed by this policy because they thought they had a commitment from the Lebanese Forces. They apparently had some covert cooperation, but no overt action. Bashir Gemayel had just been elected President. The population of Beirut had been reduced to about 1/2 million, most of them Lebanese, but including a fairly good number of Palestinians.

Once the PLO fighters had been evacuated, the Israelis were to be in static positions, but there was

no opposition to them except the multi-national forces which were thinly spread around Beirut in defensive positions. When Bashir Gemayel was elected President, even though some people considered him a "thug" and a fighter, many of us thought he was a good choice. He was 34 years old. He had certainly developed a great deal of sophistication over the previous year or so. He had progressed from being a fighter to a fairly astute politician. As I have mentioned, he had covert relations with the Israelis, which was an anathema to other Lebanese. On the other hand, he had a vision of Lebanon which included Muslims, unlike many Maronites who did not see such a multi-religious community. He recognized the necessity of dealing with the Shiites and was elected with a good deal of support from that community. He didn't get any support, nor did he seek it, from the old line Sunni Muslim leadership which was the traditional leadership that the Maronites and American administrations had always dealt with. In Beirut, there was a vacuum; only local police were patrolling the streets. No armies or militias were in the city. A very few days after the evacuation of PLO forces, Bashir went to a Phalange Party meeting in Ashrafiyah, which was its stronghold. The Phalange was the right-wing party led by Bashir's father. In effect, what Bashir was doing was having a series of victory celebrations and was using them with some skill, not simply to gloat on the victory, but to prepare for what had to be done after the victory -- repair ties, reassure people who might not have been enthusiastic that he would be cooperative and so on. The Phalange by this time had came to understand that their name was an unfortunate one stemming from Franco's fascist regime in Spain. It understood that to Western reporters the word "Phalange" had a bad connotation. So they simply called themselves Kataeb, which simply meant "The organization" and that is how we in the Embassy referred to them. A Kataeb headquarters was in an apartment in Ashrafiyah which was in East Beirut. Since all the Muslims had been expelled from that area, there were only Christians in that neighborhood, mostly Maronites. The apartment house in addition to holding offices had also people living in it. One of the families that lived there was the Shartouni family who were Greek-Orthodox. As we later found out, some members of that family had been involved with groups that favored the union of Lebanon and Syria. As I mentioned before, people who subscribed to this policy were mainly Greek-Orthodox, although undoubtedly there were members of other faiths who believed in a "greater" Syria. Bashir's murder was caused by a large bomb being placed in the apartment above the Phalange headquarters which was occupied by the Shartouni family. When the bomb went off, a number of people were killed. A number of hours passed before it was established that Bashir had been among the dead. In the meantime, there were many rumors that he was still alive, although within a couple of hours we were certain that he had been assassinated.

The way we found out what happened was that Lebanese intelligence, particularly the Deuxiene Bureau, although ineffective in many ways, had a massive telephone monitoring operation. They literally taped everything; they had heaps and heaps of tapes. As far I as I could tell, their analysis was very ineffective. They had lots and lots of raw information, but rarely did they syphon out intelligence which they could act upon in a timely fashion. But after the explosion, they went through their tapes and found a phone call from Shartouni to his sister. She lived in the apartment above the headquarters and was told to get her parents out of that apartment. Shartouni was subsequently arrested. He had planned the bombing on the supposition that his family would be gone and then discovered that they would be there. He panicked and was overheard. Shartouni was arrested; I don't know what happened to him, but I am sure he lived a short and unhappy life. We did hear about his confession during which he never admitted that he had worked for anybody. There is no particular reason to think that the political party to which he belonged was behind his

actions. He had been recruited by somebody, but it was not at all clear who that was. The assumption was that it was Syrian sponsored, but unless more information has been developed with which I am not acquainted, there seemed no clear indication who had backed Shartouni.

So now Bashir is dead. Some hours later, the Israelis announced that they were moving into Beirut to "restore order". There was no disorder. People were stunned; the Muslims were extremely apprehensive because they were afraid that the assassination would open them to massacres. The Israelis moved in, over our objections, and took over the entire city. Subsequently some Muslims professed to believe that Bashir had been killed by the Israelis because he had made it clear that he would not front for them. He had had a stormy meeting with Begin during which he had made it clear that he intended to be the President of all of Lebanon. As far as we know, the Israelis did not kill Bashir, but I would guess that they were looking for a pretext to occupy Beirut because they believed that "enemies" lived there and they wanted to get them. The Israelis are big on "enemies". They did over-run Beirut and killed some people in the process. I don't know who those people were or why they were killed.

On the edge of the city was a neighborhood called Sabra; in its center was a refugee camp called Shatila. The Israelis surrounded Sabra; cut it off completely. They mounted searchlights from buildings nearby to illuminate Sabra and Shatila. They allowed a group of Maronite fighters, all part of the militia, under the command of Eli Hobeika, who had been Bashir's personal bodyguard, and whom I had known well. He was a pathological killer. The group was fairly large. They entered Sabra and Shatila and began to kill people systematically. All the Palestinian fighters had been evacuated; there were almost no adult males. There were elderly men, women and children. By this time, I was in Washington. I was actually at the White House when the report of Bashir's assassination came in. I remember someone asking me who the next President would be; I immediately said it would be his older brother, Amin, which turned out to be correct. We all became very apprehensive about the Israeli entrance into the city.

Then word came that "something was going on in the camps. As soon as I heard that, I felt sick because I guessed what would be going on. Our political officer, Ryan Crocker, and a couple of newspaper men got into Sabra and Shatila, about 48 hours after the beginning of the massacre. They were absolutely sickened by the mounds of bodies they saw. At a minimum, there were several hundreds of people killed, but the murders were still going on. Then there was an international outcry and the Maronite operation came to a halt. The Maronites withdrew. The Palestinians estimated that 2,000 people were killed; later an Israeli inquiry established the number at 850, which I think was a whitewash. The area stunk with the smell of bodies.

The White House (Bill Clark, the NSC Advisor) was concerned how to handle this massacre with the Israelis without offending the Israelis. There was no way to do it, but that was Clark's tone. He was a nice man who knew nothing about foreign affairs. He had come from California. Clark's skills were primarily those of a domestic political operator, particularly in respect to California. Shultz had just become Secretary replacing Haig. Shultz was very, very cautious about the Middle East. He had been stung at his confirmation hearings for having been perceived as pro-Arab, which was certainly not true. He had been connected with Bechtel, a large construction firm which did some work in the Middle East, but that certainly didn't make him pro-Arab. To say that George Shultz was intimidated is probably inaccurate and inconsistent with his general personality. On the

other hand, he went to great, great pains to show that he was not pro- Arab because of these accusations. So he was just feeling his way into the Middle East. The White House wished that Lebanon had never happened because any actions the U.S. might take would have brought it into conflict with Israel.

The President of the United States was strongly pro-Israel. He had an emotional a pro-Israeli bias. He had a romanticized Hollywood view of brave, little Israel. On the other hand, he was a decent person and was clearly shocked by what was going on. I think he had also been shocked by the savagery of the Israeli attack on Beirut in which some thousands of people were killed by artillery fire and air strikes. Reagan was a nice man, but totally ignorant of foreign affairs.

So at the White House -- that means Clark and probably the President, they were very embarrassed by the Israeli entrance into Beirut and then even more embarrassed and shocked by the Sabra and Shatila events. They knew that the United States had given assurances that this would not happen when the PLO fighters were moved out.

I jumped on an airplane and returned to Beirut. Upon arrival I was briefed by my DCM (Bob Pugh) and the Political Officer (Ryan Crocker) about what had happened and was told that the Marines were returning. I was surprised. I won't say shocked because it had occurred to me that that was one of the things that Washington might do. It would also be misleading for me to say that I was adamantly opposed. I was very apprehensive about it. I didn't like the idea that there had been no discussion of this possibility with me while I was in Washington. I remember asking what the Marines' mission would be; I was told by my staff that they didn't know, but only that the Marines were returning.

From then on, we tried to make the best of it. We were always inventing missions, not very successfully, for the Marines. But the Marines landed again; other multi-national forces returned. It was announced that they were "restoring order". The Israelis reluctantly withdrew from the central part of the city. There were long, long negotiations to get the Israelis away from the airport. We had very much in mind that we wanted the Marines to guard the airport; we wanted to control it. I do not remember how long it took. We are talking about days and even weeks. The Israelis finally gave up the airport. The Marines took over and the airport became the center of American military activity. The French and Italians were down in the city; the Americans were kept out of the city even though they made an occasional patrol. A small British cavalry squadron from Cyprus eventually joined the forces.

Initially, the attitude of most Lebanese of all descriptions was that they were delighted to have these forces, particularly the Americans. They were delighted because it meant Israeli withdrawal. It also in a sense restored confidence. To say that there was euphoria overstates it, but there was definitely a feeling of optimism as the forces arrived. All of the troops, with the exception of the Legionnaires, behaved well. The Americans particularly were very well behaved. So were the Brits and the Italians. The Legionnaires, who were not really French except for their officers, tended to be tough, slightly older Europeans -- mostly Eastern Europe probably from the Balkans, some Germans. As we have noted in recent years, people from the Balkans tend not to be terribly friendly to the Muslim populations in general.

The Israelis left the airport. They stayed around the city. There were Israeli troops in the Druze areas. They immediately started to arm both the Druze and the Maronites despite the fact that these were traditional enemies. Why did they do that? Many people were very cynical about that policy and said that the Israelis were arming both sides because they knew that this would destabilize Lebanon. It was more complicated than that. I think there were factions within the Israeli government which traditionally dealt with one group or the other. Certainly within the Israeli Army and indeed in the Mossad as well there were a lot of Maronite connections. Shin Bet (the security forces) had Druze connections. There were also some Druze officers recruited into the Israeli Army. They had not recruited any other Arabs. The Israelis encouraged an assault by the Lebanese Forces -- the Maronite militia -- on the Shuf. They sent a column, with Israeli encouragement and supplies, deep into the Shuf to a place called Aley. The Druze militia, headed by Walid Jumblatt, had been quiescence all this time and had withdrawn during the Israeli invasion and not opposed. They had withdrawn into their mountain strongholds and had not fought the Israelis. The Israelis, in turn had stayed out of most of the Druze areas and for the most part had left them alone. But then the Lebanese forces invaded the Shuf with the objective of recovering what they considered traditional Maronite areas. Indeed they were partly right; for years there had been Maronite villages, but then they had been expelled. Maronite-Druze antagonism went back to at least the massacres of 1860. The Maronite forces went up to Aley and got their tails whipped. They were overextended. The Israelis helped and encouraged them, but didn't directly support them. They were deep in Druze territory and the Druze administered a sound beating to the Lebanese Forces who finally withdrew in disorder. The remaining Maronites in villages in the Shuf were expelled and some atrocities were inflicted by the Druze on the Maronites. So it was a very emotional period. I don't know how many Maronites had been left in Druze territory, but it must have been a few thousands. They fled, creating a new flood of refugees into Maronite areas with all attending stories of atrocities. Tensions between Maronites and Druze became very high. Americans, being Americans, were very bothered by all of this. We tend not to like it when people are butchering each other, when populations are being chopped up. There wasn't much we could do about it.

Our general plan, which was not really a bad one, was to try to strengthen the Lebanese Army. That Army was the only institution in Lebanon in which Druze, Shiites, Christians, etc. cooperated. It was the only national institution surviving. It was in perilous condition, but it seemed to hold some hope. I talked to Washington about strengthening the Army. I strongly advocated that policy which many of us saw as making sense. We were eager to try it. We saw the possibility of using the Army as a unifying force. It was one of the places where all factions met and indeed in many cases worked together. The best brigades were essentially Maronite and Shiite. The Druze, even though good fighters, were never effective soldiers because of disaffection. The Sunni traditionally had not been fighters; you didn't find many of them in the military. The traditional soldiers were the Maronites and the Shiites.

So we began to assist the Army. It is sometimes misreported that the Marines were training the Lebanese Army, even though, as a public relations gesture, they did have a few joint activities. In fact, the Marines were not there to train the Army. There was an American group, headed by a Colonel Fintel, which came in. They were excellent. Many of them belonged to the Special Forces. Fintel was an outstanding soldier himself. These guys were bright enough and sophisticated enough to comprehend some of the complex political situation. The Marines were very good, but

were essentially teenagers and did not grasp the difficult political situation. Their officers were excellent and the total group was very disciplined, which was absolutely essential. They were not well prepared to deal with the complexity of the Lebanese scene, while some of the Special Forces guys were pretty good at it. They had had some previous experience and therefore had a little better feel for the situation. It made sense to try to strengthen the Lebanese government in general and the Army in particular.

In the meantime, Amin Gemayel was elected President, succeeding his assassinated younger brother. I knew Amin fairly well. He had been the "politician" among the brothers. Pierre was the patriarch of the family. Amin was the older son and he was a politician-business man. Bashir was the younger son and was the guerrilla fighter and the conspirator. Superficially, it would have appeared that Amin would be better suited for Presidency. I don't think that was so, and my judgement was borne out later. Furthermore, there had been terrible jealousies between the brothers. Particularly, Amin was jealous because his younger brother had eclipsed him. I didn't realize at the time how serious that friction was. It was some months before I really understood that because of my personal relationship with Bashir I was viewed with suspicion by Amin. Amin did not trust people who had been close to his brother. That was just one of a thousand complications one had to deal with.

In the meantime, Phil Habib shuttled in and out, but his health was deteriorating. The U.S. started a negotiating process in order to effect an Israeli withdrawal from all of Lebanon. The negotiators were Israeli and Lebanese; the Americans were observers. The Syrians were on the sideline, but Habib made several trips to Damascus to keep Assad informed. At one point, Phil had secured a qualified Syrian promise to withdraw if the Israelis withdrew. This is an important point. I remember Phil coming back from Damascus and telling me about his meeting with Assad, who did say that the Syrians would withdraw from the Bekaa Valley. They had been driven out of southern Lebanon and had their air force knocked out of the skies by the Israelis. Phil said that Assad had said that he would withdraw, but that he would not permit the Israelis to gain any political advantage from their Lebanese invasion. Both Phil and I understood that to mean that the Syrians would withdraw only if the Israelis left Lebanon entirely. The Israelis had no intention of making a clean withdrawal.

The negotiations went on for months. The Israelis dragged them out and dragged them out. Every time, if close to an agreement, the Israelis would find something to object to. The Lebanese did not try to drag them out. It became clearer and clearer that not only were the Israelis going to keep their "security belt" just inside Lebanon, but they wanted an agreement that would permit them to maintain an office in Junieh -- the equivalent of an Embassy in the Maronite area. They also wanted to retain certain positions outside their security zone. They wanted explicit agreement that they had a right to intervene in Lebanon in the event of any threat to their interests. Their demands went on and on. The negotiations started in October, 1982. In the Fall of that year, a quick, clean agreement could have gotten both Israeli and Syrian troops out of Lebanon, which was very much what we wanted. By early 1983, that window of opportunity was closed. The Syrians had been rearmed by the Soviets. It was abundantly clear that the Israelis had no intention of a clean withdrawal. The situation was deteriorating in many ways. Phil Habib and then Morris Draper, after Phil just became too ill, tried to encourage the negotiations.

My job was to try to assist the Lebanese in rebuilding a government and an Army. We did have a modest aid program with which we tried to strengthen the central government. Initially, my relationship with President Amin Gemayel seemed quite friendly, but I soon realized that he didn't trust me because I had been close to his brother. I also came to understand that he was himself a very weak person. He was corrupt -- not that that was particularly important. He was also a notorious womanizer; so he had a lot of distractions in his life. Yet to be fair to him, I think he sincerely wanted most of the time to be a good President but didn't know how to do it. It was a job that would have defeated a much stronger man than he was.

The Israelis, particularly in the south, came under increasing pressure. The Palestinians had left the south. The population there was mainly Shiites, although there were Maronite and Greek Orthodox villages. The town of Saida was a Sunni city and Tyre (called Sur by the Arabs) was primarily Shiite. At first, the Israelis were not under any particular pressure from the local population, but that ended fairly quickly. The Israelis behaved foolishly of course. They were poorly disciplined. The locals became disgusted with them. Shiite resistance started, giving rise to a general local demand for an Israeli withdrawal. I was in the south a couple of times when the road was closed because Israeli trucks had been ambushed. There were a lot of banana plantations down there which made excellent cover for guerrilla activities. The roads were narrow and wound through thickly covered territory. The Israelis would come under fire; the Israelis adopted a policy of "reconnaissance by fire". That meant that they would travel these roads with heavy 50-caliber machine guns mounted on vehicles spraying the road sides. That was supposed to prevent ambushes. Naturally that killed civilians.

I have already mentioned the Israeli encouragement of the Lebanese Forces into the Shuf, which failed miserably. By this time, there were new groups of Maronite refugees. Lebanese groups in the United States mounted a campaign to do something for these refugees. That was just one more complication of being in Lebanon. Stories circulated in the United States which greatly exaggerated the atrocities. There had been some and the refugees had not been treated well. There were also refugees in Damur who were surrounded and cut off. Bad situations were portrayed in the U.S. as truly horrible -- something like we are getting today out of Bosnia in regard to the Muslims. These are terrible issues to deal with publicly because it is dangerous and indeed defeating to a policy-maker to get trapped in the position of being an apologist for atrocities or for bad things that are going on. And yet you know that they are exaggerated. So you are constantly in the position of agreeing that people are being murdered, but "there are not as many as is believed." That is an untenable position and no politician can be in that position. On the other hand, it was clear that the people who kept insisting on the misleading and exaggerated stories concerning the conditions of the refugees, the murders and the atrocities wanted American intervention. It was never practical to think of an American intervention.

Amin Gemayel one day wanted American intervention, the next day he wanted something else, but he persisted in playing his cards as if an American intervention in Lebanon was practical. He later confided to friends, as I found out, that the "American Ambassador had opposed the idea". He came to believe that somehow I was anti- Lebanese and was opposed to those "good" Americans who wanted to intervene in Lebanon, presumably to restore a Maronite supremacy. That became a bone of contention between us. My instructions from Washington were so nebulous that in some sense I could have done anything I wanted. I rarely got any instructions, although I reported and

reported. Never any response! I would periodically call Veliotes on the secure phone to find out what was going on, but it was impossible to get any instructions out of the Washington bureaucracy because no one can do anything in Washington; the "checks and balances" really work. A cleared message containing clear instruction to an Ambassador on a difficult, complicated subject is difficult to achieve.

There were individuals who came to Beirut, including senior CIA people. We also had some self-appointed right wing Maronite American-Lebanese, who encouraged Amin Gemayel and the people around him to believe that they had American support and that if they played their cards right, the U.S. would restore Maronite supremacy in Lebanon. This was very mischievous because there was no realistic possibility of anything like that happening. All it did was discourage Amin from making the accommodations that he had to make.

He also had made a cardinal mistake in dealing with the Muslims. I mentioned earlier that Bashir understood that the Shiites had to be dealt with. They were the largest group and although they had traditionally been at the bottom of society, a new Lebanon meant that they had to be taken seriously. Bashir was prepared to deal with them. He had not, when elected, given anything to the traditional Sunni leadership. Amin reversed that. He chose to ignore the Shiites; he set up relations with the Sunni leadership. They are nice people, the kind that we Americans prefer to deal with. They were well educated, a lot went to A.U.B. They were easy to deal with, so that your tendency was to have relations with these people from these big, very nice Sunni families. The only problem was that the Sunnis had cut themselves off from other Muslims; they had not developed their own militia and had in fact relied on the Palestinians. That had been very convenient since they didn't want their own boys to do any fighting -- there may have been a few fighters among them, but basically they had been protected by the PLO. The Shiites, on the other hand had developed their own militia; the Maronites had a sting tradition of fighters and armed forces going way back. The Druze were traditional mountain fighters.

So Amin became chummy with the Sunnis, who couldn't bring much to the table. He ignored the Shiites -- not just the Hezbollah, even though this was the era of the rise of that group -- extremist, fanatic religious, fundamentalist, with ties to Iran (there were a few Iranian fighters in the Bekaa Valley training Hezbollah). There was a rival group called Amal headed by Nabih Berri, a man I used to see all the time. They were much less extreme than Hezbollah -- basically secular and indeed reasonable. Amin didn't want to deal with Nabih or any of the people around him. He didn't like them. He hated the Druze; hated Walid Jumblatt and didn't want to deal with him. So he dealt with Saab Salam, who had been in Lebanese politics forever, and his son, who was not a bad guy. But they couldn't deliver anything. So Hezbollah was getting more and more active, both in the Bekaa and in the south, putting more pressure on the Israelis. In Israel, the public view began to develop that the government had blundered. The invasion of Lebanon, which initially had been popular, was being increasingly criticized as Israeli casualties mounted. There was a lot of criticism of Sharon whose reputation was further tarnished by his obvious complicity of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila. That brought the Israelis to make some motions toward withdrawal.

That is the way foreign affairs goes. There are the Americans having for a year argued against the Israeli invasion and then for Israeli withdrawal. Then all of a sudden as the situation deteriorated

we are trying desperately to negotiate not simply an agreement between the Israelis and the Lebanese, but also between the Maronites and the Druze, while at the same time rearming the Lebanese army. The Israelis then announced their intention to withdraw forcing us to ask them not to. We needed some time. That made the Israelis happy because it permitted them to say that they were ready to withdraw, but the Americans had requested them not to. In the meantime, relations on the ground between Americans and Israelis was going right down the tubes. There were some nasty incidents, almost resulting in fire fights between our Marines and Israeli forces.

Q: *Why did this tension arise between American and Israeli troops?*

DILLON: The Marines when they landed, were very pro-Israeli, particularly the officer corps. They admired the Israelis as good, professional soldiers; they knew very little about the Arabs. The Marines emphasized discipline; they were neat, clean shaven. The Israelis tended to be a bunch of slobs -- dirty, poorly disciplined, particularly when it came to firing. They were always shooting off their guns in all directions. The Israelis on the ground also seemed to feel that the Americans had come in to somehow take advantage of what they had accomplished during the war. They had a great contempt for the Americans. They greatly overestimated their own virtues as fighters; after all they had won easy wars against inferior opponents. So they came to believe their own propaganda. When it became apparent that the Marines would not be led around by the Israelis, that created resentment in the Israelis toward the Marines. The Marines, on other hand, found on the ground -- it always happens -- that they liked the Arabs and didn't like the Israelis. It was the typical reaction.

There were a number of clashes. Agreements were made where the Israelis would be and where the Marines would be. Then the Israelis would violate them. That was the Israelis sense of humor. They liked nothing better that take a tank column into American lines and then later say that it was all a mistake. You put that together with the Israeli fondness for clearing the roads with machine guns, as I mentioned earlier, and the Marines were not very happy with the Israelis. You will recall the incident where an Israeli lieutenant colonel was assigned to deliberately provoke the Marines. He used to lead tank columns into Marine lines and then pull back. On one occasion he didn't pull back and the Marine officer in charge -- a captain -- who was fed up with the constant Israeli provocations, finally jumped on an Israeli tank with a pistol in his hand and ordered the tanks to withdraw. The Israelis finally withdrew. Then the Israelis mounted a campaign to show that the Marine officer was drunk, which was an outright lie. He was a born-again Christian who didn't drink. There followed some very nasty exchanges. My friend, Bob Barrow, who by that time had become the Commandant of the Marine Corps, said something publicly supporting his men. He immediately came under public attack from Israeli supporters; he was absolutely astonished by that. Bob was a very straight arrow kind of guy and all of a sudden he was blasted with being anti-Semitic.

Q: *That used to be the standard response. We hope that will change.*

DILLON: The negotiations, in my view, were going badly. I need to say a word about my friend Morris Draper at this stage. Morris Draper was a very good American diplomat and old friend of mine. He had a very inventive mind. Morris is one of these diplomats who, when two sides have absolute impasse, can always rig something up to get around it. It was the Israelis that were

throwing up the road-blocks, not the Lebanese. Every time the Israelis would throw up a road block, Morris would devise one more ingenious way around it. In fact, that was wrong. In fact, he should not have done it. All we did was play the Israeli game because every time Morris would get them out of an impasse, the Israelis would create another one. My own personal relationship with Morris became strained during this period, although I think it was restored later. I was fed up with the process. I honestly think I was right, even eleven years later, as I look back on that period. It was a mistake to have played the Israeli game.

Then one of those damn personal things happened that can effect the course of history. George Shultz had kept out of all of this, but he was flying to Southeast Asia. He had been stung by an article written by Karen House in the *Wall Street Journal* which in effect questioned his manhood because he was studiously avoiding the Middle East. So he suddenly decided to stop in the Middle East. Just before his arrival, the American Embassy was destroyed on April 18, 1983. A few days later, all American Ambassadors in the area, including me, were invited to Cairo to meet with the Secretary. Habib was there although not in very good health. I was treated very nicely as the survivor of the bombing of the Embassy. I was given a gift by the Secretary. People were very nice to me. I naturally appreciated that kind of treatment. I would have been happier if they had been willing to listen to me, but that was too much to hope for. The subject for discussion was the negotiations between the Israelis and the Lebanese and whether the Secretary should get involved. He felt under political pressure. He also felt that his honor had been challenged by the article. He was therefore strongly tempted to become involved. The advice he got from all his Ambassadors, except Sam Lewis, was negative. Sam Lewis, on the other hand, explained why from the Israeli point of view it was important that he become involved. He spoke of the realities of Israeli politics. Phil Habib did not say anything. The rest of us were forced to expose ourselves in front of all the others. We did not get much response from the Secretary. Phil was able to speak to the Secretary in private. I have never known for sure what Phil told him, but he later told me that he had advised the Secretary not to get involved in the negotiations. As much as I loved Phil and trusted him, I am not sure that was really the advice he gave. I wish I could be sure.

The Secretary chose to get involved in the negotiations. He spent some days in Lebanon. While he was there, the rockets and shells fell all over the place; a lot fell around my house. It was not possible to know who was firing. Some was Druze artillery; there may have been some Syrian artillery although I don't think so. Clearly, there was a lot of Maronite artillery; some of the rockets came from Shiite launchers. The Israelis continued to be under pressure from Hezbollah. Shultz negotiated under these circumstances. He was a good negotiator; he had made his reputation as a labor negotiator; so he knew something about the negotiating process. The Israelis immediately understood that they had an opportunity to coopt the American Secretary of State. They made some minor concessions. The Lebanese gave in and an agreement, which immediately became a dead letter, was signed in May 1983. The Syrians of course announced that they would not cooperate since they had not been part of the negotiations. George Shultz for the rest of his time as Secretary of State, chose to believe that he had been betrayed by the Syrians. The Syrian government was a lousy government in a lot of ways, but as I mentioned earlier, Habib told me that he had conversations with Assad precisely on this point. I don't think there were any reasons to believe that the Syrians had pledged to withdraw from the Bekaa Valley if an Israeli-Lebanon agreement was reached unless it meant a clean Israeli withdrawal, which was not what the agreement called for. Indeed, it was not even a full withdrawal. But Shultz chose to believe that he

had been betrayed. I don't think that Habib felt that the Secretary had been betrayed.

The Syrians then stupidly announced that they would no longer deal with Phil Habib because "he had lied to them." By this time, it was May 1983. The Israelis were talking about withdrawal. They clearly had developed massive "stay behind" operations, but they were not happy about staying in Lebanon. They were under severe pressure at home where the invasion had become very unpopular. The Americans were desperately trying to piece together not only a Lebanese coalition to govern, but also a Maronite-Druze agreement that was essential to end the fighting between them before the Israeli withdrawal. There were moments of optimism which would come usually when the Lebanese Army looked a little better. The old Lebanese commander, General Khoury had left; he was replaced by General Tannous, a Maronite, whom many of us thought was a better soldier than his predecessor.

By June, 1983, everything was beginning to come apart. The Lebanese Army, particularly those parts that were Maronite, were going to enter the Shuf, which struck me as a dangerous enterprise. The Maronite militia, the Lebanese Forces, had already taken a beating up there. They were going to take over certain positions which they believed would protect Beirut. But just before taking that action, they made a foray into West Beirut from East Beirut where they had been stationed. They took over parts of West Beirut, cleaning out some of the Shiite fighters that had infiltrated into West Beirut. Initially, this action seemed successful, even though the American military advisors who were closely cooperating with the Lebanese Army were apprehensive about this incursion. People were commenting how well the Lebanese Army had done and speculating that their fears may have been misplaced. The incursion did delay the operation into the Shuf by about ten days.

Q: *And after that?*

Dillon: The daily shelling and rocketing had again become a serious problem. I am surprised that no Americans were killed. We were holed up in the basement of the British Embassy. Sometimes the British Embassy was bracketed by artillery fire, although it never took any direct hits. My house was never hit directly either, but I was concerned. My wife had returned to Beirut and was living in the house which had shells land very near it. We had a fire in the back yard, a piece of the roof was taken off by a rocket. We didn't have any shelter in the house, so Sue and I slept frequently in the pantry so that we would have greater protection. We slept in flak jackets. It was very noisy all night with the all the hardware falling around us. Phil was replaced by Bud McFarlane, the Deputy NSC Advisor who later became well known because of his part in the Iran-Contra scandal. Bud's presence made it quite clear that everything had changed. He and his people were not about to cooperate with people in the Embassy. Indeed, they went to some pains to conceal what they were doing from us. That situation became quite difficult for me. I had of course invited McFarlane and his people to stay at the residence; I later came to regret that. They moved in and I was stuck with them for several months. That became increasingly difficult. In the meantime, I had told the Secretary that I wanted to leave. I had been reluctant to take that step because I did not want to seem cowardly in leaving my staff, but I realized that I would not be able to make any constructive difference. I felt sure that I would be replaced by someone who would take care of my staff. I didn't think that my relationship with Amin Gemayel would improve. I had been in Lebanon a little over two years and so I asked to be relieved. That offer was accepted immediately, but it took several months before a replacement was named. So I stayed on until

October, 1983.

Q: *Why was your relationship with McFarlane so difficult. Did he mistrust the Foreign Service?*

DILLON: Yes. He and his people had all come from the NSC staff. By this time, that staff had established itself as a separate operational unit, somewhat independent in the U.S. government. Part of the problem were the tensions between Shultz and McFarlane. The latter, although number two in the NSC at this time, clearly had ambitions to become number one and eventually Secretary of State. So part of his secrecy was to undercut Shultz. Shultz always pretended not to understand that, even though it was reported to him. McFarlane set up separate communications. He also ordered that although the American Ambassador could attend any meetings that he wanted, none of his staff could. That was intolerable. The American Ambassador had a 24 hour per day job under enormous pressures and the NSC sons-of-bitches were diverting him so that if I wanted to keep track of what they were doing, I would have to do it personally. I remember particularly suggesting that Ryan Crocker be permitted to be present at some of the negotiating sessions as a note-taker. I was informed that the NSC did not trust Crocker (as I mentioned earlier, he is now back in Lebanon as the Ambassador). They didn't trust him because he spoke Arabic and was therefore probably pro-Arab. No one in the NSC group spoke Arabic. None were area experts; they all suffered a little bit from the Vietnam syndrome -- meaning that most had been associated with or had served in Vietnam. McFarlane had been a Marine officer there. They believed they had a duty to somehow restore the use of military force as an American policy option.

Q: *Both Shultz and McFarlane had been Marines. The President, although never serving in combat, had worn a uniform. Do you think that had any impact?*

DILLON: I don't know, but it was an interesting fact that McFarlane and the Marine Corps commander on the spot had a falling out because the latter understood the vulnerability of his men and became very distrustful of adventuresome McFarlane's policy recommendations. McFarlane was then joined by a military advisor -- Brigadier General Carl Stiner who is now the senior officer in the American army in charge of unconventional warfare. He is in a command down in Florida, which is the headquarters for that activity. It was also the headquarters for our recent Gulf intervention. Stiner was not a bad officer; he was very adventuresome. He was a funny guy from east Tennessee, with a real hill-billy accent. He was a muscular little man, who had been a great fighter in Vietnam -- Special Forces. Stiner immediately set up his own communications with the Pentagon at my swimming pool. It was secure voice communications so that no one knew what he was reporting. So we had CIA trying desperately to stay in the game -- they were communicating directly with Washington. Then there was the Ambassador and his staff who was supposed to be the chief channel communicating through the State Department. Then there was Bud McFarlane communicating directly with the NSC. It was a text-book version of how not to run things. The American Ambassador, as I look back, wasn't accomplishing much, but was duty bound to try to get on top of all of this. It was very difficult; there was very little cooperation in Washington because the Secretary of State wanted to stay out of it. Veliotes supported me and I appreciated that. His staff in NEA supported me. Otherwise, there was no support whatsoever from Washington.

My deputy, Bob Pugh, had been a Marine officer. I was a friend of the Commandant of the Marine

Corps, Bob Barrow, who had been my boss on the China off-shore islands during the Korean War. Then he was a major; by 1983, it was General Robert H. Barrow. So I had good relations with the Marines. In any case, McFarlane and Co. were constantly coming up with schemes that would have required naval gun-fire or forays from ships anchored off the coast. To give them credit, the serving officers mainly resisted these ideas. They really did. So whenever I am inclined to be angry with the military, which is frequent, I remember that the officers, particularly those who had infantry experience and therefore knew about killing and being killed, were particularly negative on the use of force. When you understand how nasty warfare really is and what it is like on the ground with people being killed and you are killing people, you become much more cautious about intervention than people who see intervention in terms of air strikes and naval gun-fire. It is not a question of cowardice -- I am not suggesting that the guy on the ground is any braver than the one in the airplane, but the guy on the ground really doesn't want to be there. So they see military operations from a different perspective.

That has always been on my mind. With all due respect for the Air Force, I find that people like that are more likely to think in terms of intervention than an infantry man. Now it doesn't always work that way. A guy like McFarlane who had been an artillery officer and certainly General Stiner who was a good infantry officer, loved the idea of intervention. But most of the ground guys did not. Certainly, the Marine officers who were on the ground around the airport, realized their vulnerabilities. They were on a piece of flat land, increasingly under fire from the surrounding hills, in insufficient strength and without adequate heavy weapons. It was just a battalion landing team -- a reinforced battalion -- which at any one time averaged between 1,000 and 1,400 men. In theory, they had artillery -- i.e. ship fire off-shore, but had nothing on the ground. A heavy Army unit would have been far more suitable as it turned out than a Marine unit. So the Marine officers on the ground, although aggressive young men the way Marines must be, were really fairly apprehensive about American involvement which would have forced them to take up arms on one side or another. Therefore the Marine officers were in increasing opposition to Bud McFarlane and his team.

Q: *Who was McFarlane negotiating with and against whom did he intend to intervene?*

DILLON: He had decided that his mission was to support Amin Gemayel. The remaining opponents of Gemayel, with the PLO gone, were the Druze. The first big clash between McFarlane and me came when he went to see Amin and didn't take me along. Amin told him that the Americans had made the "colossal political mistake" of taking Walid Jumblatt -- the hereditary chief of the Druze -- seriously and that had build up Jumblatt artificially. He said that if the Americans broke relations with Jumblatt, then he, Amin, would be successful in establishing himself and his government in Druze areas. It was a wildly unrealistic scenario. It was nonsense. To Amin's delight, McFarlane accepted this theory and came back and announced to the White House, where Bill Clark was still the NSC Advisor, that he had promised the President of Lebanon that the American Ambassador's contacts with the Druze would be cut off. I immediately protested. There was a series of telegrams back and forth. Washington did what Washington always does: nothing! It argued and sat there. Lines were drawn. The State Department and the NSC went at each other hammer and tongs; the CIA stood by and watched the proceedings. McFarlane was clearly so wrong that eventually about six weeks later, without a decision ever being made, McFarlane, without admitting that he had been wrong, withdrew his objections and in

fact, personally started dealing with the Druze. He met with Jumblatt in Geneva. So the whole program collapsed, but it illustrated the problems of dealing with people who don't understand the situation on the ground.

I don't want to cover the day-to-day sequence of events. It would just take too long. Eventually, the Israelis did withdraw, at the worst time, of course. Immediately, fighting broke out on a large scale between the Druze and the Maronite parts of the Lebanese Army. The rest of the Lebanese Army at this point completely disintegrated. The Druze deserted as did most of the Muslims. There were a few Shiites still fighting, but the main remaining Lebanese Army troops were Maronite. They were placed in the hills above my house -- about five miles in the Shuf -- at a place called Souk el Garb, which was a very important cross-road.

In September, the real crunch came. The Israelis had withdrawn. Fighting broke out at Souk el Garb. The Lebanese Army brigade up there commanded by Brigadier General Michel Aoun -- a good, tough little son of a bitch. He was under heavy pressure from the Druze. There was a question of whether there would be a break-out at Souk el Garb. There was a considerable amount of disagreement among the Americans about what would happen. It is very difficult to prove the negative. The people at the Embassy were not convinced that a break-out was imminent; they were also not convinced that any Americans would be in danger even if the break-out occurred. Bud McFarlane was convinced that the Lebanese government would be over-thrown and that the Americans were in danger if there were a break-out. At that point he got into a spat -- about which I didn't find out until later -- with Colonel Tim Geraghty who commanded the Marines at the airfield. McFarlane wanted naval gun-fire to support the Lebanese Army. Geraghty felt very exposed and thought that his Marines would pay the price of retribution for such naval shelling. It was not until several months later that I learned of this dispute. One day, I returned to my house; McFarlane was in the radio shack that we had erected in the back yard. He had a message in his hand which he showed me. It was a message requesting that gun fire from the ships off shore be authorized because of the imminent danger of a break-out at Souk el Garb. The justification was that the break out would endanger the Americans in Lebanon, because if the Druze broke out, they would over-run my house and we would all be butchered. I didn't think that would happen because we had good relations with the Druze and that therefore we would not be direct targets, although there is always the possibility of some stray ammunition. So I was surprised and very concerned. I doubted that in fact the situation was as dangerous as McFarlane described, but I also considered the consequences if my assumptions were wrong. I didn't know everything. I wanted some time to consult my staff, but McFarlane said there was no time for that. In later years, I wished of course that I had stopped the message, but I didn't. I thought that Bud was probably wrong, but I could not be certain. So the message was sent. It was not immediately acted upon in Washington. I wished I had known at that point that Colonel Geraghty was protesting. The fact was that there was no single American leader in Lebanon. What we had in Lebanon was a bunch of disparate American elements, with no one designated to be in charge. The American Ambassador should have been in charge of both civilian and military components. But McFarlane was a Presidential Envoy not under me, and deployed troops, e.g. the Marines. So we had a lot of bickering and in my view, a shameful situation. I was very bothered by it all. I had great difficulty in finding out what McFarlane and his team were doing. I suddenly became aware that they were lying to me. I remember one of the guys, after talking to me, walking away and saying: "I hate to lie to an American Ambassador" and everybody laughed. They didn't realize that I could overhear the

conversation.

Then two things happened. The Lebanese brigade held its ground even though under very vicious assaults. Bud's message said that the Maronites were being attacked by Syrians and PLO, none of which was true. There were some Druze officers from the Syrian Army that had been seconded to the Druze forces. There were no PLO forces involved. But the naval gun fire did start , first from destroyers and later from the battleship *New Jersey*. It fired its 16 inch guns, which was the first time in a long time that the Navy had found a role for these huge ships and guns. Sixteen inch shells are huge and very indiscriminate. We ended up killing Druze villagers; it didn't effect the outcome of the fighting in any way. We also ran some air strikes which were similarly ineffective. One American plane was shot down and its pilot was captured.

Finally, my replacement was announced: Reg Bartholomew. He had been a senior civil servant, always in politico-military affairs. I think George Shultz thought that putting Bartholomew out there, with his politico-military background was a way for State to reassert itself. If that was his idea, it was not very realistic. Shultz also thought in terms of negotiations which were not a problem. So I left on October 11, 1983. Eleven days later, a truck filled with explosives drove into the American building at the air field and killed 242 Marines. I was personally very affected by that event. The Marines were just teenagers; they should not have been there.

Then I had the happy experience for the next few of weeks along with some other people, including the new Commandant of the Marine Corps, explaining to various committees of Congress what happened and answering a lot of "stop beating your wife" kind of questions. I talked about the absence of a single command. I told the truth as I had observed it; it was too late not to. It was a terrible position to be in particularly if you have even the slightest sense of loyalty to the system because you had to be self-serving or defensive. I have seen many others doing that. But you are put in a position of having to say: "Well, no, I was the Ambassador, but I did not set up the Marines' defensive positions; Marine officers did that. No, I did not lay down the rules of engagement for the marines. I was briefed on the rules, but that issue was a military one. The question of whether the sentries had rounds in their chambers was an issue for Marine officers to decide." You end up feeling very defensive and self-serving, even through all was the simple truth. Geraghty's career was ruined as were the careers of the other Marine officers. That was sad because they were good officers. Lieutenant Colonel Gearhart who was responsible for the defense of the Marine's posts was crippled for life. It was all very, very sad.

I was outraged in general at the Reagan administration. I was very unhappy with the State Department, very unhappy with George Shultz and not very happy with myself. I did believe that my staff and I had behaved honorably and that was about the best that could be said about us. I was outraged at the Israelis; I am still angry at their supporters. I found myself in front of Congressional committees, trying to answer some serious, some frivolous questions from some self-serving Congressman about what went on in Lebanon.

Suddenly, you find yourself under political attack because Marine casualties were taken out of Lebanon, even though the attack happened eleven days after my departure. The injured Marines were taken to hospitals in Germany; they were not taken to Israel. There were suspicions that this was done because the Marine officers were anti-Semitic. I didn't have any role in the decision of

where the Marines were evacuated. They went to Germany because the military had a system and a large military establishment in Germany which was set up to handle situations like this. When the American military had a disaster on their hands, they didn't look for political gestures -- like flying casualties to Israel and putting them into Israeli hospitals, which may have been very good. They followed the prescribed systems and flew them to Germany. It took a couple of hours longer, but for me or General PX Kelley, the Commandant, to sit in front of a congressional committee and deal with questions that at a time when there were real problems and real questions to be examined about events in Lebanon, was absolutely outrageous. But that was in fact what happened. The questions went on and on about whether the Marine sentries had rounds in the chambers of their rifles and who was responsible for that. It wouldn't have made any difference, although it did turn out that they did not have any rounds in their chambers. They had magazines in their weapons, but to prepare to fire, they would have had to pull back the bolts and slide them forward. This was because the Marine officers were very concerned about fire discipline. They didn't want Marines shooting at other Marines; they didn't want Marines shooting civilians.

It was a very sad experience for me. I had already made up my mind that I wasn't going back to the Foreign Service. At least, a while. I had been contacted by the UNRWA Commissioner General, a Swedish diplomat, whom I had met in Lebanon. He wanted an American deputy. So, on January 2, 1984, I went to Vienna on secondment from the Foreign Service and became the Deputy Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. Shortly thereafter, I was promoted to the rank of assistant secretary general in the U.N. which carried a nice tax-free stipend with it -- certainly more than I made in the Foreign Service. I spent the next four years and nine months in that job. In 1987, I concluded that whatever happened, I would not go back to the Foreign Service and I retired. I stayed on at UNRWA for another year, traveling throughout the Middle East although the headquarters and my home were Vienna. In September, 1988, I accepted the job as President of AMIDEAST which is that I am doing right now.

Q: *Can we go back to the time that the Embassy was blown up? How were its functions carried on?*

DILLON: I forget how large a staff we had at the time. It had grown again to a medium size Embassy. In the first place, we were supporting a number of operations, such as the Habib Mission, which by that time was headed by Draper. We had a military cooperation team, who were located in the Embassy. We had a small AID group -- seven or eight people -- who were assisting the Government of Lebanon in various ways. We had a very active consular section. We had me, not only trying to keep up with negotiations with the Amin government, but also dealing with all the American groups that had an interest in Lebanon. I was flooded by Maronite groups, Armenian groups -- all of whom were descending on Beirut to make sure that their countrymen were being properly treated and that they were getting sufficient attention from the American Ambassador. I hope that the American Ambassador was reassuring because I did give all of these groups my attention. It was an exhausting job; you are literally working 14-16 hours per day. The underground warfare between the Turks and the Armenians in Lebanon was also beginning to be troublesome. There were murders on both sides. Many, many Lebanese were anxious to go to the States or to send their children to the States. The consular section was under tremendous pressure. The USIA program, which was trying to do a little bit for the American image with limited resources -- two or three people -- was under the direction of John Reid, who was first class and a

wonderful guy. John was trying to run his program and acted as my spokesman and press advisor and occasionally as a speech writer. I don't know how he did it all. Pugh, the DCM, was running a lot of the day-to-day stuff and also the liaison with the military. He did a magnificent job and later got all sorts of awards -- as many medals as the State Department can give. The Political Section -- Ryan Crocker and a couple of young officers -- worked very closely with me because they were trying to keep track of what was going on in Lebanon. We were also trying to have some input into the negotiations. It was an extraordinarily busy period. Our wives were in Beirut with us, but we did not allow dependent children. There were days when I must admit it was fun. As any Foreign Service officer does, I love a fast moving, exciting operational situation. I liked my staff. They were good. Oddly, morale was high. When they did a report back in NEA, I was pleased when they said that despite everything that happened, the Lebanon mission had the highest morale of any mission in the Near East. I think that was because people were so wrapped up in what they were doing.

The Lebanese being Lebanese were still fairly active socially. A lot of it stemmed from the wealthy Maronites in the hills above us. The contrast between the wealthy Maronite establishments just to the east and north of us and the terrible conditions in West Beirut and in the south will forever remain vivid in my mind. I could literally spend a day down at Ain el Hilweh, which was the largest refugee camp -- it housed 50,000 -- which had been leveled. It stunk of dead bodies; people were living in the worst imaginable miseries. A few hours later, I would be back at an elegant party in the hills above Junieh.

Q: *Do you have any speculation about why the Embassy was bombed?*

DILLON: It turns out that the Embassy was hit essentially by Hezbollah, even though that was not clear at the time. Hezbollah had Iranian support. It was simply a blow at the most visible symbol of American presence. It was during the time when the car bomb had become very common; it was not however the suicide car bomb, but just cars that were loaded with explosives and left in the streets. A deserted car became an object of great suspicion. We had cleared the area around the Embassy; cars were not allowed to park around the Embassy because of the possibility of a car bomb. The suicide car bomber was something new. The Iraqi Embassy had been destroyed a year earlier in a gigantic blast, but we never found out what had happened. There was suspicion that that had been a suicide bomber, who had driven a car bomb (a white Mercedes) underneath the Embassy. The suspicion was that the driver had stayed in the car and had killed himself.

The Iraqis and the Iranians were of course enemies. They were at war. There was the traditional Sunni-Shiite split. There were other issues involved. We did not learn a lesson from that, particularly that we would be a target for a suicide attack. We had discussed the possibility, but when you try to make a decision about security arrangements, you stress the more likely events which we thought would be episodes that gave the bombers a chance to get away before the blast, as might be in the American tradition. Americans sometimes engage in suicidal attacks, but not in suicide attacks. A suicidal attack is one which is understood that chances of survival are not very good. The suicide attack on the other hand is one in which one's willingness to die is the attack itself. That is an important distinction.

We kept improving the Embassy's defenses, but were devoting more attention to the suicidal

attacks than the suicide. No cars were permitted to be parked around the Embassy. The building itself stood in a very busy part of town. The traffic, as long as it kept moving, was allowed on the main street. We were constantly under small rocket attack; it was so common that we didn't think much about it, even though the small rockets -- RPGs -- could be very destructive. They were much more destructive than the old bazookas. Our strategy was to keep them at a distance. We had ordered some barriers to be set up so that the Embassy could not be rammed. Ironically, when the Embassy was blown up, the barriers had arrived but had not yet been put in place. We had not yet seen the suicide bomber as a principal weapon. We had seen it as a possibility. It was used against us very effectively. The only way we could have prevented it -- as we did when we moved into the British Embassy -- was to put barriers at a distance and prevent any vehicle from approaching the building.

Frequently, the British Embassy was bracketed by shells, although I don't know whether it was a target. Heavy shells are frightening things; they do a lot of damage and make you feel completely helpless. But the British Embassy was never hit. There were craters around the Embassy, but the building itself was never hit. We were, as I mentioned, in the basement and therefore relatively well protected. As I said before, we were very busy and did our best to operate out of that basement. We did some reporting. Ryan Crocker reported brilliantly. I did a lot of the reporting. Pugh was the operational manager of the Embassy. Military attachés are usually not good reporters and ours weren't, but our attaché was reporting some good stuff. The Agency people were busy trying to recreate some of their disrupted networks. They remained involved -- in retrospect probably in a dangerous way -- with the Maronites. That had been their traditional connection in Lebanon. It is customary for the Agency to have some connection with the right wing groups in any country. So the Agency was in touch with the Maronites and some Armenian groups.

The overall policy problem was the question of the Israelis. What we really needed was a fast, clean withdrawal and that could have been worked out. It would have been accompanied by a Syrian withdrawal. I am convinced that in the Fall, 1982 that could have been accomplished. By the Spring, 1983, when George Shultz became involved, it was too late. When Shultz was told that, he became angry and felt that "his" representatives, including me, were negative. He never said that to my face; he was very polite to me. But I was told later that Shultz saw me as negative, which is too bad because that is not the way I am. As a matter of fact, if I have a fault, I tend to be overly positive. I am basically a positive person. I think there were many times in my career when I persisted in being positive longer than I should have. So if George Shultz found me negative, it bothered me.

In any case, I have described what life in Beirut was like. It wasn't awful until the McFarlane crowd moved in. At that point it really became awful.

Q: *Where were you when the bomb went off? How did the Department of State respond after the event?*

DILLON: The staff in the Department of State in these kinds of situations always responds well because they are unambiguous situations and they know what needs to be done.

I was in my office on the eighth floor. It was the middle of the day on April, 18, 1883. It had been

a little quieter than it had been. I had resumed my jogging. I was getting ready to go to AUB with my security escorts, which numbered about ten by this time. They would take over the field and keep everybody at a distance, while the American Ambassador would jog about three miles around the track. So I was ready to go. I had just had a phone call from a German banker who worked for El Mashtek Bank, half of which was owned by Morgan Guaranty. I knew what the call was about because I had talked to a friend of mine, Rod Wagner, who was a senior officer at Morgan. The issue was more a Jordanian problem than a Lebanese one. I didn't return the call because I didn't feel like discussing the matter just at that time. So I finished what I was doing. My Lebanese social secretary had just been to see me -- it was the last time I ever saw her. On the day before, we had held a marathon in Beirut and held a party afterwards. One of my bodyguards had a little too much to drink at that party and was hung over the next morning. He stayed with me while the other security forces went downstairs to wait for me. I started to undress and then I felt guilty about not having taken the call from the German banker. So I called him back and while talking to him, I stood in front of a window as I struggled to put on a heavy Marine T-shirt. All of a sudden, the window blew in. I was very lucky, because I had my arm and the T-shirt in front of my face which protected me from the flying glass. I ended up flat on my back. I never heard the explosion. Others said that it was the loudest explosion they ever heard. It was heard from a long distance away.

As I laid on the floor on my back, the brick wall behind my desk blew out, Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. The wall fell on my legs; I could not feel them. I thought they were gone. The office filled with smoke, dust and tear gas. What happen was that the blast first blew in the window and then traveled up an air shaft from the first floor to behind my desk. We had had tear gas canisters on the first floor. The blast set them off so that the air rush that came up through the shaft brought the tear gas with it and also collapsed the wall. I was on the floor cursing away believing that the Embassy had been hit by a rocket. We had been hit by a rocket a week earlier and I thought we had a repeat performance. I was angry as someone gets when you are attacked and you want to lash back even though you are flat on your back and helpless. I couldn't move. In a few minutes, Bob Pugh, my secretary and Tom Barron, our administrative officer, came in. They were all covered with dust because the walls of their offices had also collapsed, but fortunately they were able to get out quickly because they had not been pinned down. They grabbed the flag staff and pried up the wall a little so I could wriggle out. I looked at my legs and to my immense pleasure, found out that they were still there and functioning. I was cut by the glass everywhere, except in the face because, as I said, my face had been protected. I had cuts and bruises and small pieces of glass in me, particularly in my arms. They itched terribly. It wasn't so much pain as itching.

So I was in pretty good shape. The others were in good shape. We all started to cough and to wretch from the tear gas. Someone vomited, as I recall. We got out through a window and stood on a little ledge outside. A gust of wind came along and cleared the air. That made us feel much better. We didn't know what had happened. The central stairway was gone, but the building had another stairway, which we used to make our way down, picking our way through the rubble. We were astounded to see the damage below us. I didn't realize that the entire bay of the building below my office had been destroyed. I hadn't grasped that yet. I remember speculating that some people had undoubtedly been hurt. As we descended, we saw people hurt. Everybody had this funny white look because they were all covered with dust. They were staggering around.

We got to the second floor, still not fully cognizant of how bad it was, although I recognized that major damage had been done. With each second, the magnitude of the explosion became clearer. I saw Marylee McIntyre standing; she couldn't see because her face had been cut and her eyes were full of blood. I picked her up and took her over to a window and gave her to someone. A minute later, someone came up to me and said that Bill McIntyre was dead; he had just seen the body. That was the first time I realized that people had been killed. I didn't know how many, but I began to understand how bad the blast had been. Bill had been the chief of the AID section. I felt sick. We staggered to a window where someone had put up a ladder and we climbed down on that.

Next to our building was a large apartment house where the DCM lived and which held some temporary offices. We went there and immediately called Washington and reported what had happened. By this time, rescue workers, police and American reporters had arrived. We found our personnel officer and put together a roster of all the people we thought would have been in the building. We then checked off those that we knew were still alive. We understood that it would be sometime before the rubble could be fully searched for bodies. We wanted to report the names of survivors as quickly as possible. Pugh and the security guys were back at the Embassy, supervising the rescue operations. I was on the phone to Washington. We went over our roster trying to give Washington all the information we had on our personnel. After a while, we ran out of information; we looked at the roster and there were many, many people on whom we had no information. That really shook us.

Then I went back to the Embassy, joining the mass confusion. I remember two things. One was John Reid, the PAO, who asked me to come to talk to the newsmen who had assembled. I didn't know what to tell them. Reid was a great man; he stuck a piece of paper in my hands and said: "Here's what you say!". That is what you need in these cases. So I walked out in front of the TV cameras, still wearing my T-shirt, dust in my hair, looking beaten up and stood up in front of the cameras and acted as if I had done this every day of my life. I made my statement and took a few questions. Reed tugged my elbow and pulled me away. I tell this story first to give a plug to John Reid and second to illustrate why you need staff, why you need professionals like John Reid. My concern was what happened to the Embassy and the finding of the survivors, but from the point of view of the United States it was important that the media be addressed with dignity and a display of courage, even if a little false. We had to give the impression that terrorism would not change our policy course. That is what I intended to convey and people later kindly said that that was what I did. Then I returned to the building.

We were digging out. The last alive person was brought out five hours after the explosion. The last one was a Kopty, who was one of our Lebanese employees. He looked like a piece of hamburger; I did not recognize him. Someone had to tell me who he was; I never thought he would live. Anne Damarel, one of the AID employees, came out and I thought she would not live. After about five hours, we didn't find anymore people alive. In the end there were 62 or 63 dead. We continued digging for five days, searching through the wreckage, bringing out bodies, sometimes pieces of bodies, identifying people. It was very sad. There were families of the missing Lebanese employees standing around and waiting. There were families of people who had been in the Embassy on business. There were families of people who had simply disappeared. We found bodies of people who had been blown into the sea while walking past the Embassy. Finally, after five days, we quit. By that time, all we were finding were scraps of people. It was very difficult to

talk to the families, particularly when we couldn't find the missing member. The families were stunned. They were very quiet. There was no shrieking as you sometimes get. These families were stunned and exhausted and weeping, but on the whole surprisingly quiet. It was terrible.

I and the other Americans were busy. Somehow we were all functioning very normally, working hard. We had become so busy, so wrapped up in the mess in hand, we shut out the enormity of the catastrophe.

Q: *It must have been very much how troops in combat react.*

DILLON: Very much. We acted surprisingly normal, although we were really not. A psychiatrist was sent out from the Department of State. I think it was the same doctor I saw after the terrorist attack in Kuala Lumpur. He talked to us. I remember saying to him: "I am surprised how normal I feel". He told me that was a normal and typical reaction. The defensive mechanism that we all have inside had come to the fore. If we didn't have that mechanism, we could not have functioned. That made me feel better, because I was concerned about my reaction.

I didn't break down until about ten days later. I went to the AUB chapel to talk to the families of those who had died. It was a memorial service and they were all there. John Reid had helped me to write out a brief talk. I stood there, looking at these very sad and unhappy faces and they in turn were looking at the American Ambassador as if he would be able to say something that would make everything well. So there I was looking at all these people, whose family members had been blown to pieces. I got most of the way though the speech. When I got to the last sentence, a sob welled up and I stopped. I couldn't say anything more. I was in tears. I felt so inadequate and sad looking at all those people. People would have liked to hear that their relatives died for some noble cause. They didn't! Within a few minutes, I recovered, but it was one of the saddest moments in my life in that chapel. I wished I could have done something for those people. To my surprise, years later the son of a man who had been killed told me how much my words had meant to him and to his mother.

The British Ambassador, a good guy, immediately invited us to use his Embassy. We took over the basement. He told London afterwards, which upset the Foreign Office, but it was too late by then. We were already ensconced. In general, I find that people behave well in these kind of circumstances. We got good support from other Embassies as well -- the Canadians and the British were the first, as usual, but everybody tried to help. The Lebanese relief people were good, but unfortunately there were also some looters among them. That is one of the reasons people became relief workers because they had an opportunity to loot the dead. That happens in many places, not just Lebanon. It is sad to say, but it is a fact.

The AUB hospital had become so good over the years treating people like ours that we didn't feel the need to evacuating them. Eventually, we did, but their first care was at the AUB hospital.

My outrage over Lebanon has shaped my career. After that I wanted to do things that were vaguely humanitarian or educational. I guess that is what I am doing now. Eventually, I wanted to come home because although Vienna is a nice place, it is Austria and not the United States. By the time I left Austria, I had spent more than 26 years overseas, going back to the China coast days.

JOHN M. REID
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Beirut (1981-1983)

Mr. Reid, a Virginian, was educated at Virginia Tech, Columbia and Harvard Universities. A specialist in East Asian and Pacific Affairs, he served in Saigon, Vientiane, Bangkok and Seoul, primarily as Public Affairs Officer. In his Washington assignments, Mr. Reid also dealt with affairs of that region. He was also assigned as Public Affairs Officer at Beirut during the Lebanon Civil War, and was a casualty in the bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut. Mr. Reid was interviewed by Charles R. Beecham in 2002.

Q: From Bangkok, you went into Arabic language training to prepare for Beirut. How did that happen?

REID: I was winding up a tour as deputy PAO in a large post, and I thought it was time to try my hand at a PAO-ship. I started bidding on all the PAO jobs within my range—Canberra, Lisbon, East Berlin and so on. After each bid, personnel came back to me and said, Director Reinhardt has to approve all PAO assignments, he might not approve one for you, so you should bid on something else. My consistent response was, I want to be a PAO, so why should I bid on something I don't want? At one point, they encouraged me to be IO (Information Officer) or CAO in Moscow, to which I delivered the same response. Finally, one night, I got a call from the area personnel officer who said, "If you want to be a PAO, we have the place for you." They had me. If I didn't take Beirut, I might never have another chance to be a PAO.

If the Harvard year was one of the best of my career, the year studying Arabic at FSI was absolutely the worst. The FSI facility was crowded, dirty, poorly maintained and downright squalid. We rotated among Arabic instructors whose teaching was uncoordinated, and techniques for student motivation ranged from none at all to Prussian authoritarianism and public humiliation. I have always done pretty well at languages, but Arabic is difficult, and most of the students were younger than I. I was very fortunate to have one of the best Arabic instructors during the final weeks of my miserable little year; otherwise, I would not have done nearly so well as I did. Arabic was then a two-year program with the second year at an FSI branch in Tunis. USIA gave me only the first year, so I wasn't really prepared for anything, particularly when I found that the Arabic I had managed to learn at FSI wasn't the Levantine Arabic spoken in Lebanon. Nevertheless, I found a tutor in Beirut, studied with her for an hour every morning before work and eventually got my three-three.

I think my experience at FSI was not untypical. It was pretty much the same when I went back several years later to learn Korean. FSI now has moved to a new place, which I haven't seen. I hope it has gotten better. If the foreign service is serious about its officers learning languages, it can't treat them like peasants while they do it. A few years later, I did a Thai brush-up in a private school run by Chick Sheehan and John Ratliff, two former foreign service language specialists.

They had clearly given a lot of thought to the environment and instruction style, and it made an enormous difference.

Q: It is my impression that your tour as PAO Beirut could hardly have been more eventful. It was hazardous in the extreme, certainly, and challenging in other ways, I am sure. This seems a good time and place to put on the record a more or less detailed account of your experiences there.

REID: When I arrived in Beirut on August 3, 1981, the Lebanese civil war had been going on for years. Beirut—indeed, all of Lebanon—was divided into enclaves controlled by various militia groups, although there was nominally a national government which had very little actual authority. The largest enclave, all of East Beirut—and much of the Lebanese territory north of Beirut—was controlled by the Christian Phalangists, while West Beirut and areas south were controlled by groups loyal to various Sunni, Shiite and Druze politicians, or by the Palestinians, who controlled the territory around the U.S. embassy. To get from one group's territory to another—and especially from West Beirut to the east and back—you had to pass through checkpoints maintained by armed militia who were generally poorly trained, aggressive, unprofessional and sometimes hostile. Sometimes, there was small arms fire from one enclave to another, and there were regular artillery exchanges between East and West Beirut. Parts of the city were ruined, parts appeared almost normal, and the green line, separating east and west, ran right through the former financial district, which was totally deserted and devastated. Before going out at night, we'd check the local radio stations for bulletins on where the artillery was falling—just like weather bulletins. If we were going to Ashrafiya and the radio said shells were falling there, we'd call our hostess and convey regrets.

When I got there, a decision had been made to close the USIS information center, and we lost six of our 18 FSN staff positions within a couple of months of my arrival. The American secretary left, and the position remained vacant for a long time because no one would accept the assignment, and USIA personnel would not assign anyone who did not want to go. Eventually, Beth Samuel, who had been the PAO's secretary during the first part of my second Bangkok tour, called me and said she'd do anything to get out of Washington. "I'd even work for you, honey, and even in Beirut." Shortly afterward, Beth appeared with her Filipino husband, Leonardo. Both of them were great people and great friends, and I don't know that I could have gotten through the two years in Lebanon without them. No matter how bizarre or terrible things got, Beth could always find something in the situation worth a good laugh. As for Nardo, he taught me every karaoke song I know.

The American ambassador was Robert Dillon, who arrived in Beirut a few weeks before me and who was there throughout my tour. Bob provided superb leadership during crises that would have overwhelmed most people. We had a very free and candid relationship. I considered him a friend and admired him. In my career, I worked with two, maybe three, ambassadors with whom I considered it a rare privilege to serve. Bob was one. Aside from the ambassador and DCM, I probably worked most closely with Ryan Crocker, the political counselor, who later returned to Lebanon as ambassador, and with Tom Barron, the admin counselor who was very helpful to me, even when he had plenty of other problems to worry about. I also worked with Bill McIntyre, the USAID director. Bill was a friend, and he was killed in the 1983 embassy bombing.

My first priority in Lebanon was to determine what I could do, given the limitations of my resources and the environment. My twelve-person FSN staff included two librarians and, eventually, we were able to get a small, public-access library and research facility going on the ground floor of the embassy. I was able to get some good people into the IV program, and someone once told me that the best favor I could do anyone was to get him out of Lebanon for 30 days. If there was one little blessing, it was that I could manage the small Fulbright program in Lebanon without having to deal with a local commission. I could decide on the grantees myself, and, through the Fulbright program, we managed to get some very effective, very helpful grantees into Lebanon.

The Lebanese soon let me know that cultural activity was important to them, and, in fact, some of the European embassies and cultural centers—the Germans, the Italians, the British and others—managed to stage cultural activities. This was one way we could show our flag, but none of the performing groups sponsored by USIA wanted to come anywhere near Lebanon. Eventually, I was able to identify a few good solo performers who were willing to take the risk. One, in particular, Bill Matthews, a classical guitarist, came twice and gave some very well attended, well-received performances. Bill was a very good guy who really like Lebanon and made a lot of friends. With Bill, as was always the case, we had to do separate performances in East and West Beirut, since nobody wanted to cross the green line. Bashir Gemayel, who was later elected president and subsequently assassinated, once surprised us by showing up at a performance Bill gave at the Maronite university in East Beirut.

One thing we began doing was a series of regular background briefings for resident American media. At that time, there were about 12 or 13 American correspondents based in Beirut, including Tom Friedman for The New York Times, Bill Stewart for Time and Peter Sherman for CBS. These were all very professional, knowledgeable people. We would do the briefings at Dillon's residence in East Beirut, and Ryan Crocker was always on hand. The discussions were very candid and very honest, and I always left them feeling I had learned as much as anyone there. The sessions helped us build a good relationship with a very important core group of American journalists, and this served us very well later. Eventually, as more American journalists began appearing in Beirut, the briefings became unmanageable, and we had to stop.

I think I had just about convinced myself I had established a pattern for my two years in Lebanon, when the Israelis invaded in June, 1982, eventually coming as far north as West Beirut, where the embassy was. As soon as the invasion began, however, before the Israelis reached West Beirut, the embassy evacuated dependents and so-called non-essential staff. Dillon asked that I stay, but Beth and her husband left. At that point, I think both Bob Dillon and I believed I would be needed to help deal with foreign journalists, but there were surprises ahead.

Within a few days after the invasion began, Ambassador Dillon called me in and told me there were reports that Americans—a lot of them—were in Jounieh, in the Christian area north of Beirut, trying to get out of Lebanon. With the Israeli blockade of the Lebanese coast, they were trapped. He asked me to go to East Beirut, find out what I could about the situation and report back. At this point there was much less international media focus on the embassy than we had expected, and neither of us thought I would be dealing with the problem of stranded Americans for more than a few days. I remember a hair-raising ride across town, with RSO (Regional Security Officer)

armored vehicles in front and behind, me driving the PAO car at breakneck speed along the Corniche Mazraa, while Palestinian antiaircraft guns blazed away from traffic islands in the middle of the road.

Once I was in East Beirut, I was on my own. It was amazing. West Beirut had been a city at war, with Israeli planes bombing the southern suburbs and Palestinian artillery shooting back. As I drove north along the coastal highway, however, things became more and more normal until I actually saw water-skiers in the Mediterranean just south of Jounieh.

The one person I knew better than anyone else in East Beirut was a former IV grantee, Father Jean Thabet, the priest who ran the Maronite university near Jounieh. I surprised him, and, when I explained my situation and what I was doing, he offered me hospitality for a few days. I actually spent three or four days living with the Maronite priests. Unfortunately, some of the Americans in East Beirut heard there was someone from the American embassy at the university, and they began showing up. At this point, I had no help to offer, and my visitors began to be a serious problem for my hosts.

Then I began to get a little lucky. I had studied Arabic at FSI with Lisa Piascik, one of the consular officers in Beirut. As I was leaving for East Beirut, Lisa gave me the home phone number of Bedros Anserian, a senior consular FSN stranded in East Beirut. Within a very short time after I got to East Beirut and called him, he was on hand. He stayed with me throughout the entire time I was dealing with the American evacuation, and we functioned as an effective team. The second bit of luck was that the mayor of Jounieh offered us some office space in the Jounieh city hall. Actually, Bedros and I were at one end of a long table in the mayor's conference room, with people from the Canadian embassy at the other. Third—and this may have been a mixed blessing—I connected with some of the local Phalangist people. Whatever their politics, they were very helpful to me, finding me a place to stay and, eventually, helping get American citizens and green-card holders through the Israeli blockade. Bob Dillon and Ryan Crocker accepted the necessity of this arrangement, although I am not sure they were entirely happy with it. Another break was that the Italians sent a naval ship to withdraw their nationals and kindly offered to accommodate any Americans who wanted to go. By this time, there were quite a few anxious people waiting, and getting them all onto the Italian ship solved the immediate, most pressing problem.

I don't know where all of those people came from. A lot of them were people of Lebanese descent who had American passports or green cards, but they kept coming. After the Italian ship left, I found a local ferry operator in Jounieh who was willing to take people to Cyprus—charging an outrageous fare, of course—but the problem was still the Israeli blockade. Initially, I tried to work out an arrangement with Ryan Crocker, whereby I would pass passenger names and passport numbers to him so he could, somehow, clear the passengers with the Israelis. The phones weren't working, however, and my only contact with Ryan back in West Beirut was by a little portable two-way radio which was very cumbersome and unreliable. I remember driving to a mountain behind Jounieh, where I could get barely passable reception, and trying to communicate 50 or 60 names to Ryan, having to spell most of them using the military alphabet: "Waheed; that's whiskey, alfa, hotel, echo, echo, delta," and so on. Eventually, with the Phalangists, we were able to work out an arrangement where I would tell one of the Phalangist people that I had checked the

documents of passengers and that there were no Palestinians among them. They then worked things out. I never asked how. Finally, a U.S. navy ship came to take people out. By this time, so many people had left that I wondered whether we would fill it. We did.

While I was dealing with the problem of stranded Americans, most of the embassy staff, including Ambassador Dillon, relocated from the embassy chancery in occupied West Beirut to the ambassador's residence in East Beirut, some distance from Jounieh. Regular consular officers began dealing with stranded Americans, and I began spending much more of my time at the ambassador's residence, where most of the embassy functions were now located. Phil Habib was on hand, negotiating an Israeli withdrawal from Beirut, contingent on a Palestinian withdrawal from Lebanon, which he was also trying to arrange. The eventual arrangement included a provision for U.S. Marines, as well as troops from Italy and France, to be in Lebanon guaranteeing the security of the withdrawing Palestinians. The imminent arrival of the Marines attracted tremendous international media interest, to which I was trying to respond with the help of Edgard Khouri, one of our FSNs who had joined me in East Beirut and Sami Sfeir, a former Radio Lebanon newsman, a friend, whom I somehow managed to pay from petty cash. Eventually, I was joined by public affairs officers from the Marines, the Sixth Fleet and even the Pentagon. Under the circumstances, arranging for these people was difficult, but, eventually, they were very helpful. They knew a lot of the journalists and players on the American side, and I was able to get them around locally. We worked well and effectively together.

With the withdrawal of the Israelis, we were able to move back to West Beirut. When I first went over to East Beirut, I'd thought I would be there a few days, but, actually, it was about three months.

I think I should say something about the Israelis. I was not impressed, and I think most of us weren't. To my eye, and I think to the Lebanese, they appeared unkempt and undisciplined, particularly alongside people like the U.S. Marines. Also, they appeared arrogant in dealing with the Lebanese—and they were deliberately provocative, as when they erected Israeli flags at intervals along the road leading to the Lebanese presidential palace. Once our Marines were on the ground, I know of one serious confrontation which attracted media attention and which, I was told, almost led to some shooting. Under cover of darkness, Israeli troops moved some markers which were supposed to distinguish an area they controlled from one controlled by the Marines. The situation was only resolved the next day when the markers were repositioned by a group comprising the Marine commander, the Israeli commander and the American DCM. I haven't mentioned the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, when the Israeli troops surrounding the camps allowed Phalangist militia troops in to do the killing. The commander of the Israeli troops was Ariel Sharon, now the Israeli prime minister.

I think it was sometime during this period, before we returned to West Beirut, that Ryan Crocker asked me to take a trip through South Lebanon with Senator Paul Tsongas. Tsongas was in Beirut and planned to drive south to the border, where he would cross into Israel. Our little motorcade would then return to Beirut. I sat in the rear seat of an embassy sedan with Tsongas and one of his aides, who had studied at the American University of Beirut and who was very knowledgeable about Lebanon. I found Tsongas easy to talk to, and he asked very good questions. There were three incidents during this trip, however, that I recall vividly. In Sidon, our first stop, we were

supposed have lunch with the mayor. When we arrived at the mayor's office, however, we were confronted with a group of English-speaking Israeli officers who tried to engage us. We had been briefed to have nothing to do with the Israelis if this happened, and we did our best to ignore them. I remember that one of the officers had an American accent, and, above his uniform pocket, there was a name—Cohen, I believe—that could have been American. Sometime later, Trudy Rubin was visiting Beirut, and, when I told her this story, she said it was probably an American anthropologist, a specialist on South Lebanon, who had dual citizenship and who was serving with the Israeli army. The second incident was when we got to Tyre and were taken into a neighborhood where the Lebanese told us a school had been shelled by the Israelis. We walked through a ruined neighborhood that reeked of decomposing bodies, and, in the basement of the school, encountered groups of partially decomposed bodies covered by lime. These, we were told, were civilians who had taken refuge in the school and who had died during the Israeli artillery barrage. The third incident occurred just before the Israeli border, where Tsongas asked the motorcade to make an unplanned turn into a road leading to a camp where the Israelis were detaining prisoners. When we reached the camp gate, Tsongas delivered his name card and asked for the camp commander. When the commander appeared, Tsongas asked to go inside. The commander's angry refusal was caught by a CNN crew which had been tailing our motorcade, and, when one of the Israeli soldiers saw this happening, he began beating the cameraman with his rifle butt. There was a scuffle in the dust, after which we withdrew. We accompanied Tsongas on to the Israeli border and then returned to Beirut.

Shortly after the embassy moved back to West Beirut, the Palestinians left, and our Marines, having completed their mission, returned to their ships. Media activity appeared to subside a bit, but, if I thought things might now be normal, I was mistaken. With the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gemayel, we moved back to East Beirut again for a few days. Shortly after that and the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, our Marines returned. It is interesting; I don't know why, but I was part of the embassy group that met the military advance party and surveyed the building and area that the Lebanese offered for the Marine base. It was an unused civil aviation building near the airport—the building that was bombed in October, 1983, when 241 Marines died.

Habib left, and, although the Israelis had withdrawn from Beirut, they still occupied Lebanese territory south of Beirut. Morris Draper, who had been Habib's deputy, assumed responsibility for dealing with this problem, and, for a time, he negotiated with the Israelis and the Lebanese at a hotel right on the edge of Israeli-occupied territory, south of Beirut. Morris Draper asked that I accompany the U.S. delegation to act as spokesman.

For about two weeks in December, I think, I spent my days in a conference room listening to negotiations. At the end of each day, everyone would agree on some sort of routine media statement which the Israeli spokesman, the Lebanese spokesman and I would go outside and read in Hebrew, Arabic and English respectively. Doing this job was taking all my time, but my only responsibility was to read a daily statement, usually a couple of short paragraphs. Meanwhile, work was piling up on my desk, and my staff was receiving no direction. I talked to Ambassador Dillon about the problem and got myself relieved of my spokesman's responsibilities. These were assumed by Chris Ross, an Arabic speaker and a very good officer, who was a member of the U.S. delegation.

The first three months of 1983 were probably my best time in Lebanon. Beth returned, and, for the first time, it was possible to move freely about Beirut. I remember one night Beth and I drove over to East Beirut for pizza, and people in the restaurant were absolutely astonished when we told them we'd come from the American embassy.

I had become very friendly with Commander Pete Litrenta, the Sixth Fleet Public Affairs Officer, and Pete helped me arrange ship tours for my Lebanese contacts. The ships were just off the Lebanese coast, they attracted enormous interest, and the Lebanese considered the ship visits and souvenir baseball caps a great perk. I took everybody out there I possibly could—TV people, newspaper people, university people, Maronite priests, cultural people, everyone I could think of. One evening, the Sixth Fleet commander hosted a very elegant dinner on his flagship for senior embassy contacts. Pete Litrenta worked with me on this one, and, when I discussed it with Ambassador Dillon, we agreed that he, I and a few other embassy counselors would each invite two people. I invited the Minister of Information and the head of Lebanese television.

During this period, I think the United States enjoyed a broad base of trust and friendship in Lebanon. People on the right gave us credit for getting the Palestinians out. People on the left gave us credit for getting them out safely and for getting the Israelis to withdraw. The Marines in Lebanon and the Sixth Fleet off-shore were regarded as a neutral presence providing security and stability.

Sometime early in 1983, I received an unusual caller in my office, an Egyptian professor from the Beirut Arab University. Beirut Arab University was the one Lebanese university with which I'd had no contact. It was off-limits. It had a very radical student body, mostly poor Shiites and Palestinians, and I think it got its funding from the Libyans and Syrians. My caller explained that he was one of about six Egyptians from the University of Alexandria, teaching at Beirut Arab University. They were funded by a program which had begun when Nasser was Egyptian president and which still continued. My caller then suggested that there might be some areas where we might cooperate, and he proposed that I have lunch with him and his colleagues to discuss this.

Since he'd told me I could bring an embassy colleague along, I checked with the ambassador first and then invited Ryan Crocker. I think Ryan was quite taken by all of this and quite surprised that it was happening. We were treated to a lunch in a good Lebanese restaurant and to good conversation. Subsequently, the Egyptians invited me for a tour of Beirut Arab University. Since they didn't want me showing up with American diplomatic plates on my car, they sent the university president's limo to collect me. They gave me a comprehensive tour of the place, including the basement garage where armored scout cars were parked, and the bookstore, where the hottest item was a color poster showing Iranian students burning an American flag.

After a discussion of cooperative programs, I began asking USIA's help in identifying some American academic authorities on Islam who might lecture at Beirut Arab University. I was surprised that USIA was able to recruit several good people who were able and willing to come. We did a whole series of lectures on Islamic studies in the U.S. and scholarly American views of Islam. My objective was to show that Americans respect Islam and take it seriously and that Americans can contribute to serious discussions of Islam. The lectures were well attended and successful. One morning, I got a call from one of the Egyptians who asked me if I'd seen the front

page of the morning edition of al-Nida. Al-Nida, the communist paper, was so consistently hostile to the U.S. that I had given up on it long ago. This morning, however, the front page was filled with a write-up on one of our lectures, a picture of our speaker and some very favorable editorial content.

A few months later, one of the Egyptians came to see me and said that, although he and his colleagues would like to continue our cooperation, he did not think conditions were right. I told Ryan Crocker about this, and he remarked that the embassy had gotten several signals like this. It was not so clear then, but it is clear to me now that our situation in Lebanon had changed. Among other things, we had come down solidly on the side of the Lebanese army, who were fighting with Druze militia in the hills behind Beirut, and ships of the Sixth Fleet had shelled some of the Druze positions. We were no longer neutral. A few weeks later, on Monday, April 18, at three minutes after one, a truck loaded with TNT crashed into the front of the embassy and exploded.

Did we ever know anything about who was responsible for the bombing? A young friendly embassy security guard, Mohammed, used to stand outside the embassy every morning at seven o'clock when I went in to meet my Arabic tutor. He'd greet me, "Good morning, Mr. John," and I'd reply, "Good morning, Mohammed." It turned out later that Mohammed was a captain in the Palestine Liberation Army, one of the most radical Fatah spin-offs, and that he had stood outside the embassy and given the signal for the truck with the TNT to start moving. One of the purposes of the attack, apparently, was to kill the American ambassador, and Mohammed's job was to signal when Ambassador Dillon reentered the building.

Shortly before I left Lebanon, I asked Ambassador Dillon whether or not he could tell me anything about who was responsible. He said that there were so many layers of control, so many anonymous exchanges of information and instruction, that we would probably never know who was ultimately responsible. I knew a USAID officer, however, Anne Dammarell, who was badly injured in the bombing, and Anne has maintained contact with many of us and spent a considerable amount of time on this question. According to her, there is conclusive evidence that, through Hezbollah, the Iranian security service funded and directed the whole operation.

Just before one o'clock in the afternoon on April 18, I'd thought of going down to the embassy snack bar for a sandwich but decided to use the quiet hour to focus on a particularly difficult office chore. If I had gone for lunch, I would surely have been killed, because, when the bomb detonated, propane tanks in the kitchen exploded, killing all but one person in the snack bar.

I was at my desk, facing the office entrance from the area where Beth sat. To my right were floor-to-ceiling windows looking out over the Corniche, a broad street running along the Mediterranean coast. When the bomb detonated, I was about to turn around and begin typing something on my typewriter to the right of my desk. If I had already done so when the bomb detonated, I probably would have been blinded by flying glass.

The room suddenly seemed to turn white and begin changing shape. My next realization was that I was on my back beside my desk, and, looking up, I could see the wall behind my desk beginning to crumble and fall—very slowly, it seemed—toward me.

The wall landed on me, and I don't recall feeling anything. I was covered in debris—bricks, plaster, mortar—almost up to my neck. I knew that something bad had happened, and I didn't know what, but I recall that I felt pretty rational. I thought I could hear small arms fire, and I smelled tear gas—I found out later that the Marines had stored tear gas canisters in the embassy basement, and these ruptured in the explosion. I remembered my army training and, to escape the tear gas, turned my head and pressed my nose as close to the floor as I could.

The first thing I heard was Beth in the office next to mine, shouting "John, are you all right?" I replied, "I don't think so." A lot of blood was running from my scalp and face, I could see out of only one eye, and I was pinned to the floor.

I then heard some military officers who had been having lunch in the Marine mess, next to Beth's office. They shouted, "Beth, are you okay?" I heard Beth answer, "I'm okay, but I don't think John is." Someone shouted, "John, where are you?" I answered and then heard some noise before someone shouted, "John, we can't find you. We'll get help and come back."

I waited and then decided I couldn't stay where I was. I freed my arms and threw rubble off my body. I was eventually able to grab a radiator pipe behind my head and begin pulling myself free. I was concerned about possible spinal injury, but, when I had worked myself free, I pulled myself to my feet. Nothing was broken, and I knew then that, no matter how bad it was, I would probably be all right.

I found my way out of the office; I remember that everything seemed to be rearranged. When I came out into the hallway, I encountered Maha, one of our Lebanese staff. My clothes were torn, and I was covered with dust and blood, and Maha began screaming. I remember shouting, "Maha, shut the hell up, and let's get out of here." As I looked down the corridor, I recall that it seemed brightly lit, something I had never seen before. In fact, I was looking into the area where the center of the building had collapsed, now illuminated by direct sunlight. Later, when I returned to my office, I found that the fracture had actually occurred in the center of my office floor, and the falling wall had actually been brought down by the collapse of the building center. If the blast had not thrown me across the desk, I would probably have been buried in the collapse.

Maha and I took the stairs to the first-floor corridor, behind the consular section. It was chaos. Glass and blood were everywhere. Partially dressed Marine security guards were running around with their firearms, shouting, "Where are they? We'll get'em! We'll kill'em!" Injured people were lying around. At this point I didn't know what else to do, and I sat on the floor, leaning against a wall. One of the embassy janitors, a very friendly man to whom I had always spoken, knelt beside me and began mopping blood from my face with brown paper towels from an embassy bathroom. One of the consular employees, Mary Agopian, came staggering down the hallway. The front of her body and her face looked like they had been shredded, and she was screaming, "Somebody help me; help me!"

The embassy security officer appeared and told us to form a single line, that he would lead us out of the building. I took Mary Agopian under the arms, someone in a uniform took her feet, and we began carrying her. Our single file moved through some hallways and offices and then stopped. The lock on the emergency gate had rusted shut, and we had to reverse the whole column and find

another exit. Eventually, we came to a wall at the north end of the embassy. Some of the younger guys from the political section were on top, lifting people across. We handed Mary up. Lebanese began crowding around us, trying to escape, and, rather than get into the scuffle, I backed off. Someone shouted, "Okay, John, it's your turn." I raised my arms; they pulled me up and dropped me across.

When I dropped to the other side, Lebanese Red Cross workers took me by the arm and walked me to a waiting ambulance. I sat on a seat beside an American woman who was already inside. Two Lebanese then came running up with a stretcher on which there was a dead Lebanese lady, her face black and her swollen tongue hanging out of her mouth. The ambulance started with a lurch, and the stretcher with the dead Lebanese lady rolled out onto the ground. They hadn't strapped her in. The Red Cross people got the body back into the ambulance, and we started up the hill toward the AUB hospital. French paratroopers lined the street; they had sealed off the entire area.

When I got to the hospital emergency room, I spotted Beth, whose face was cut and bleeding. After a short time, someone gave us a quick examination, said they were dealing with some really serious cases and, since ours could wait, would we mind? Of course not.

After a short while, I saw the hospital director come in with the Lebanese Minister of Public Health, whom I knew. I spoke to the minister, and he introduced me to the hospital director as the U.S. embassy spokesman. The director asked for my help. The hospital switchboard was so flooded with incoming calls from news media in the United States that no one inside the hospital could make necessary calls out. Would I mind taking the calls and dealing with them?

I began taking the calls, working out a little statement: This is John Reid, the American embassy spokesman. I can give you 60 seconds; is your recorder on? I am at the American University of Beirut hospital, there are people injured, at this point, we don't know how bad it is, and so on. Once people had the sound bite, they were satisfied.

Afterward, when I found the hospital director and told him that things were under control, he offered to introduce me to one of his best plastic surgeons so I could begin getting my face and head repaired. I asked him if the offer could include Beth, and he agreed. The young doctor who looked after us, Usama Hamdan, was a superb physician and an excellent person. We became good friends, and we still are. Today, he and his wife, also a doctor, have a practice near Boston.

When I first arrived at the emergency room, I began looking for some of our Lebanese staff, but I couldn't spot anyone. Someone then told me that Elias Kawar, our senior FSN was right outside the emergency room. I went outside and found Elias, Maggie Teen and a few other people. Among us, we were able account for eight of the twelve Lebanese on our staff. Before I could pursue this, I saw Peter Sherman with his CBS camera crew headed toward me, and I didn't want to be doing any on-camera interviews, so I retreated inside.

After Beth and I had gotten the glass picked out of our faces and our cuts sewn up, we left the AUB hospital. It was early evening, and we really didn't know where to go. At this point, we were both extremely anxious to let our families know that we were alive, and we recalled that one of Beth's friends, a German lady, had a telephone from which it was possible to direct-dial international

calls. We hailed a cab, whose driver was very reluctant to take us, bandaged as we were and covered with blood, dust and the water used to wash our wounds. The driver relented only after I promised a very generous tip. When Beth's friend opened her apartment door, she began screaming, "The radio said you were dead!"

Beth and I each had a couple of large whiskeys and made our calls. When I got through to my father, he told me that Sam Courtney, NEA area director in USIA, had phoned to tell him he had heard me on the radio and that I was okay. I was grateful then and still am for Sam's consideration.

When Beth and I began walking back along the Corniche to our respective apartments, a U.S. Marine passing in a jeep gave us a ride. When I got to my apartment, I encountered Phil Habib. I had never had much to do with Habib, and I wasn't even sure he knew who I was. He did. "John, are you okay?" he asked. I was. "That's good," he said, "because you look like hell."

My apartment was on the ground floor of a building a short walk away from the embassy, and, with the embassy ruined, it was the closest available space where various embassy operations could set up shop. Eventually, I had to move out of the apartment and into a rented room, and, by Tuesday morning, April 19, what was left of the consular section had already occupied my living room. There was a small room in the apartment which I had outfitted as an office and a study and in which I had provided myself with desk, phone, typewriter and other essentials. I was able to hold onto this room, and this was where Beth and I worked for the remainder of my time in Lebanon. Early Tuesday morning, I was in this room, with Beth and a few of the Lebanese staff, trying to account for everyone. We had been able to account for eight of the twelve Lebanese on Monday, and, sometime on Tuesday, a ninth appeared.

As this was happening, Bob Dillon and Ryan Crocker came into the room. It was the first time I had seen Dillon since the bombing, and I did not know that he also had been injured. Bob and Ryan told me that there were about 200 journalists in front of the embassy building, and they were asking for some kind of statement. Would I get something together?

I had lost my eyeglasses in the bombing and hadn't found my spare pair. Even if I had, the right side of my head was so swollen that I couldn't have worn them, and my right eye was swollen shut. I touch-typed a draft statement which I couldn't even read. Bob looked at it and said, "It's okay. I want you along. Let's go."

Bob and I walked the short distance to the embassy, where there was an enormous crowd of journalists. As we approached, there was an explosion of flashbulbs and TV lights. It did not occur to me how much attention my swollen, bandaged head was attracting, but this was where the picture was taken that appeared in so many U.S. papers. Dillon read the statement, which sounded good, and began taking questions. At some point the questions became repetitious, and I tugged Dillon's sleeve and said something like, "Sir, I think this is getting a little too chatty. Let's get out of here."

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Beth and I had to go back to AUB to see Dr. Hamdan. On Tuesday, I showed him a large gash on my left leg which had begun to heal. To prevent a scar, he had to reopen the wound before he sutured it.

Three of our Lebanese staff were still unaccounted for. Edgard and Hassan staffed our small press operation and had been in the office immediately next to mine. Riad was one of two librarians who worked in the small library on the ground floor. Edgard was Lebanese Christian, Greek Orthodox, and married to a Danish lady. Hassan was Egyptian, a former employee of the USIA printing plant which had been in Beirut. Riad came from a Lebanese Christian family. By Wednesday afternoon, relatives of all three appeared at my apartment. Edgard's Danish wife was very distressed but under control. Hassan's wife seemed resigned. Riad's wife happened to appear when I was with Bob Dillon and became extremely emotional. Fortunately, our chief FSN, Elias Kawar was able to talk to her and help deal with the situation.

At about eleven o'clock Wednesday night, I was lying, fully clothed and awake, on my bed in the PAO apartment. Christine Crocker, Ryan's wife—also his secretary, tapped on the door and said, "John, they've found Hassan." With Christine, I walked back to the embassy, where, under floodlights, people were working with machines and shovels to clear debris. Someone helped me climb the debris, and, as I watched, Hasssan's body was pulled out first. His face was black and barely recognizable, but he and Edgard had given me a press briefing shortly before the explosion, and I knew how he was dressed. I made the identification. Shortly after one o'clock Thursday morning, Edgard's body was pulled out. When I called Edgard's wife and gave her the news, she was very calm. She said that, a short time before, her phone had rung, and, when she picked it up, there was no one on the line. She had wondered if Edgard had somehow gotten trapped in the embassy and was trying to reach her. I said that it wasn't possible and that I was sure he had died instantly. She thanked me for calling and said she would let Edgard's family get some sleep and give them the news in the morning. My memory of how Hassan's family responded was less clear. Hassan's wife didn't speak English, and I am sure that this was something I did not want to handle in my far-from-perfect Arabic. I may have called on Elias Kawar for help.

I was still very concerned that we could not account for Riad, and, on Thursday, we were told that search-and-rescue operations would be suspended because a high-level Washington delegation was expected to visit the embassy site Friday morning. The group would be headed by Larry Eagleburger, and Jock Shirley, agency counselor, would represent USIA. I recall that I was extremely angry, furious, that the search was suspended because of this. I remember Dillon saying, "John, when something terrible like this happens, the American people feel they have to show something, to make a gesture, and this is what they are doing."

During this period, I gave several media interviews, including one on-camera for NBC. Bob Dillon had told me to use my own judgment and not worry about clearance or guidance in on-the-record discussions of the human-interest aspects of the bombing. This gave me a lot of exposure, more than I realized and certainly more than I cared about, but I thought it was important to be open and responsive and to make the point that the embassy was functioning and we were carrying on, doing our jobs. To the extent possible, I also wanted other people to be seen by the folks back home. On one occasion, I was able to arrange coverage of a group of consular officers—Dundas McCullough was one of them—trying to make identifications by examining personal effects recovered from the embassy.

Preparing for the VIP visitors on Friday took organization, because I knew there would be a lot of

media interest. To the extent that we could, we laid out the area in front of the embassy and decided who was going to be where.

My recollection is that the group choppered in, either from Beirut airport or from the Sixth Fleet. I was still pretty angry that this was happening. One of the first people out of the choppers was Larry Eagleburger, who was leading the group. Eagleburger had a brief exchange with Dillon and then walked directly over to me, took me by the elbow and said, "John, I understand you've really had a tough time." It was the perfect gesture. I still have a photograph of the moment.

Jock Shirley was a very good presence during this visit. I still controlled the kitchen in my apartment, and, for several days after the bombing, I had my Lebanese cook provide lunch for the Lebanese staff, Beth and myself. It was a way to get everyone together and to share whatever it was we were feeling. I think it may have been important for all of us; I know it was important for me. Jock joined us for lunch in my kitchen on that Thursday, and he was very low-keyed, interacting with everyone.

Edgard's funeral was that afternoon, in a Greek Orthodox church. There were so many funerals then. Bob Dillon had gone to one, and sent his wife to Edgard's. Jock sat at the front of the church with Mrs. Dillon, and Beth and I sat farther back with our Lebanese colleagues. A Greek Orthodox priest presided over the service and spoke English. It was very moving. When I left the church and greeted Edgard's wife, I lost it. I sat on the steps in front of everyone and started sobbing, and a Lebanese journalist I knew helped me to the car. Later in the afternoon, I went to see Hassan's widow.

That night, I accompanied Jock to a reception and dinner that Ambassador Dillon was giving for everyone. I recall standing out on the terrace with Jock, having a conversation, and looking out over Beirut. Jock said that he thought that both Beth and I ought to have a break from Beirut as soon as things settled down a bit and we could manage it. He said he'd get USIA to provide each of us with consultation orders so we could get back to the U.S., have a little time with our families and do whatever we wanted to do. He suggested that we both start making plans and stay focused on this as we dealt with whatever faced us in the coming weeks. It was a very generous, welcome offer, and, in fact, I think Jock's initiative may have prompted State to make the same offer to its people who stayed in Beirut after the bombing. Jock said he also wanted to get back and look at possible opportunities for me after Beirut.

The next day, Saturday, after the delegation left, the recovery operation at the embassy resumed, and around eleven o'clock in the morning, someone asked me to come down to the embassy and identify a body that was probably Riad. I was directed to an ambulance, and someone in a U.S. Navy uniform told me to go inside by myself and take as much time as I needed. The body was on a stretcher, draped with a cloth which was removed. Riyad had always been a careful dresser, and I was struck with the incongruity of his grey suit, seemingly immaculate white shirt and grey silk necktie underneath his black, bloated face. This was the second and last time I lost it. I remember screaming, "The bastards! Those rotten bastards!"

That afternoon, I called on Riad's widow and family.

The next month was a very tense and exhausting time. Secretary of State George Shultz came out and began shuttling among Jerusalem, Damascus and Beirut, trying to work out some kind of arrangement on Lebanon. His stops in Beirut were unpredictable and came with very little notice. I was trying to get the staff back together and engaged in the program. At the same time, I was trying to salvage whatever I could from the embassy. I was particularly concerned to get the Wireless File equipment out, set up in my apartment and operating again. Bob Dillon was asking for the File, and I really needed the statements and background to deal with the media.

The people from the Marine public affairs office would offer help. They would send trucks and people over and begin moving things, and I would have the staff together to help organize and decide where things would go. Then, suddenly, someone would come rushing up and say, "Shultz is coming; they want you at the airport!" I would drop everything, and Elias and I would go running down to the airport. From the airport, we'd go to the presidential palace where we'd be cooped up in a room with the journalists traveling with Shultz. They were tired and not very pleased that the Lebanese weren't letting them get closer to the action. A couple of them were extraordinarily bitchy. Every time somebody said something publicly, Elias and I would record it, and Elias would take the tape back to Beth so she could do a transcription for a cable. Then the cable had to be cleared with everybody. This would go on for a couple of days, and they'd leave for Jerusalem, Damascus or someplace. Elias and I would go back to the embassy. The staff would be gone, the marines were gone, the trucks were gone, all our stuff was sitting around someplace. I would start all over again, getting everybody together, moving in the same direction, and Shultz would come back. I really don't know how many times this happened.

On May 6, the embassy organized a memorial service in the AUB chapel, which was filled with people. I drafted a little speech for Bob Dillon, and it was something that came easily for me, really from my own heart. As Dillon finished reading it, he choked up and started sobbing. When I walked out of the chapel after the service, Elias Kawar, who knew I had done the draft, looked at me and asked, "What have you done to our ambassador?"

One other incident from this period stands out in my mind. The Marines provided security for Shultz at the airport, and, one evening, after Shultz, the journalists and everybody else had flown off into the sunset, Col. James Mead, the U.S. Marine commander said, "John, let's go back and I'll buy you a beer." Mead was a very impressive guy, about six-and-a-half-feet tall, very smart, and he had a tremendous presence—I understand he later made general. Anyhow, we went back to the building where the Marines were bivouacked, the one that got bombed later, in October. The Marines had set up a little area where they hung out, and they had supplied themselves with draft beer. Everybody was tired, exhausted, feeling a little angry and frustrated, I think, and I am the only civilian in there drinking beer with all those Marines wearing combat fatigues. At some point, Mead said to me something like this: "John, I've been there, and I know. Some people go through their entire lives and never face a real trial. Some people face the trial and can't cut it. Others, though, face a terrible trial and do the necessary. John, the day after the bombing, when I saw you standing out there with your ambassador, you faced the test, and you did your job. You can be proud of that for the rest of your life."

Sometime around the end of April, Jock Shirley phoned from Washington and said he had found the perfect job for me. At first, he wouldn't tell me what it was because he said he wanted to work

things out. A few days later, he phoned again and said he'd like me to come back and be Deputy Director in the Office of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

I was pleased. After Beirut, I welcomed the idea of getting back to the U.S., and the prospect of being involved, once again, with East Asia was very attractive. Furthermore, Rob Nevitt, the office director for whom I would be working, was an old friend for whom I had great respect.

I communicated this to Jock and then told him I had two reservations. First, I had told Bob Dillon that I would stay in Beirut another year if he wanted me. I would have to find out from Bob how he felt about releasing me from this commitment. Second, I wanted to ensure that Jock had talked to Rob and that Rob was happy with this arrangement. Jock assured me that he would talk to Rob. Later, however, when I told Rob about this conversation with Jock, Rob told me that Jock never discussed the assignment with him before it was announced.

When I told Bob Dillon about Jock's offer and asked how he felt about me leaving at the end of my second year in Lebanon, he said, "Look, John, enough is enough. I may not be hanging around that much longer myself."

Sometime in May, USIA sent somebody in—the PAO from Doha or someplace—to look after things for a few weeks so I could get away. When I left, I really felt that I needed a little break before I faced my family and friends. I stopped in Athens, and Dick Overturf, who was assigned there, arranged for me to go down to Rhodes. Nick Gregorio, director of the VOA relay station in Rhodes met me and got me installed in a hotel. Nick and his staff were very hospitable to me, but they respected my privacy.

My dad met me at Dulles and drove me down to Staunton. After a few days at home, I drove up to Washington, went into USIA and found Jock, who took me right in to see Charlie Wick. In my presence, Jock sprang the proposal for the EA deputy directorship on Wick, and Wick said, "Consider it done." After that, Wick always remembered who I was. I would meet him at a reception at the Chinese embassy or someplace, and Wick would haul me around, introducing me, "This was our guy in Beirut." The Chinese would look at me, wondering what Wick was talking about.

I did see many friends on that visit, including Ed Schulick, who was already sick undergoing treatment at Sloan-Kettering. In any case, I didn't stay in Washington very long, because I wanted to get down to Virginia and be with my family.

When I got back to Beirut, things were about like I left them, and I pretty much kept on doing what I'd been doing before. USIA had assigned another officer to Beirut, Carol Madison. Carol was very bright, competent and hard-working. She had a great personality and made many friends. I think she was genuinely shocked by what she encountered in Lebanon, but she was tough enough to deal with it. I couldn't see any major clouds looming on the horizons, and I felt only moderately guilty about leaving Beth and Carol behind. Beth was scheduled to leave soon, and USIA was supposed to be sending someone in to succeed me. I left for the last time on August 3, 1983, two years to the day after my arrival. The Beirut airport was closed, and a friend in the military attaché's office got me onto a chopper headed for Cyprus. Once I was in Cyprus, I had to hang

around for a couple of days before I could get a flight on to London and Washington.

DIANE DILLARD
Chief, Consular Section
Beirut (1982-1984)

Diane Dillard was born in Texas in 1934 and received a bachelor's degree from North Texas State University. She joined the Foreign Service in 1965. Ms. Dillard's career included positions in Mexico, London, and Beirut, where she was Consul General. She was interviewed in 1990 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *Why did you leave to volunteer for "sunny Beirut?" In a minute we'll come to what the situation was like in Beirut. One does not go to that voluntarily.*

DILLARD: The weather in London got to me and the crowds got to me. London is such a crowded city, and working with as many people as I did was enough people for me. Also, having served in Washington, I had fallen prey to the real estate bug, and I had overextended myself. London was a very expensive town, and it was dark and rainy, and I couldn't afford to do much. Then the situation changed at work. We were no longer part of a team directing this great effort; we were just "clerks" who were responding to direction. So, since the work had been the main interest there, and I felt that I did not get along that well with the consul general, and he was going to find that out sooner or later, it behooved me to move along. So I volunteered to go to Beirut because it was sunny and I could make some money. And I never regretted it.

Q: *What was the time frame and the situation in Beirut? Why was it a matter of volunteering for it?*

DILLARD: There had been a civil war in Beirut since 1975, and this was 1982. Two days after I volunteered to go to Beirut, the Israelis invaded Lebanon, and my career development officer told me I could withdraw my volunteer if I wanted to, but I didn't. I left London in August and was supposed to go to Beirut in September, but in September occurred the massacres at two Palestinian refugee camps.

Q: *Sabra and Chatila.*

DILLARD: Following that, the newly elected president of the country, who had not yet taken office, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated. So the Department suggested that I wait a few weeks. So when I finally went; they had just moved back to the embassy proper. The staff had previously been evacuated to East Beirut and operated out of the ambassador's residence there and in some other buildings. There had not been a consul general since April. One of the junior officers was doing a magnificent job of running the section.

Q: *Who was that?*

DILLARD: That was Lisa Piasick. I'm sure it must have been very difficult for her to accept my

coming after she had been doing that and had managed the thing all during that very hectic summer. It seemed to be not that big a job at the time. This was in October. October 16, 1982 is when I arrived. The Israelis finally withdrew. We had the multinational forces. It seemed to be going well. The French patrolled the downtown area and the Americans were at the airport. The Italians had a hospital. Then a small British group came. The workload was difficult enough, but I had some good junior officers, and they did an excellent job. The national staff was wonderful.

Q: *What type of workload are you talking about?*

DILLARD: You know, I can't really remember now, but we had the problem that you so often have, that the nationals don't want to do the non-immigrant visa work. So I changed the concept. I changed to teams, and I had two teams, kind of like the "inside" team and the "outside" team. We had some people who weren't that good with the public, but who were very good workers. We had others who were excellent with the public. So instead of a non-immigrant visa team and an immigrant visa team, I just changed it to the "public-dealing team" and "the others." Everyone learned everybody else's job. So that kept me busy during the winter. Then on April 18, six months after I arrived, the embassy was blown up and five of my employees were killed and four of them were injured, some more severely than others. So we were quite a small staff.

Q: *Could you explain what happened and how you experienced this?*

DILLARD: There was an office in town, a "Palestinian" office, and I had received a lot of complaints about that office from American tourists who had no business being in Lebanon. They complained that if they tried to take photographs in that neighborhood, people in "pajamas" would come out and try to take their cameras away and such. And "I'm going to write my congressman that you won't do anything about this." That was one of our big problems. That building got blown up in February, but then everything settled down. There would be sniper fire and there would be battles in far off parts of the town and such.

Then on April 18, it was raining and it was cold. I had gone home for lunch. I had a woman come in to clean one morning a week, then she came at noontime to walk my dog every day. But when I came home one afternoon she was there, and she explained to me that she was going to have to have her "blood pressure removed," so she wouldn't be able to walk the dog for a while. I started coming home for lunch, and I preferred it. I only lived three minutes away. So I had gone home for lunch and walked the dog.

I was in the house, and I still had my raincoat on because it was cold. I was heating some soup, and what I thought was a tremendous clap of thunder occurred. It really hurt my ears, and then the windows fell in so I knew that it wasn't thunder. I went to the phone to call my family, because I knew whatever it was, they were going to hear about it, you know. I always called them when things happened. The phone was dead. I went next door, across the hall, to ask my neighbor if she had any idea what had happened; she had lived there for a number of years and she would have had the news on.

Just then, the DCM's wife came down the stairs and said it was the embassy, and that she was going there.

Q: *Bonnie Pugh.*

DILLARD: It was Bonnie Pugh, yes. My neighbor said, "It is the embassy." We could see the back of the embassy from her apartment, and it looked fine. There was smoke coming up from the top, but it really looked fine. So I asked her to take my dog, because although she had glass, too, she was going to be there, and I couldn't leave him with the glass lying all over the place.

I went down, and people had started coming out the back of the embassy, and the ambassador came out.

Q: *Bob Dillon.*

DILLARD: Bob Dillon. Then Bob Pugh came out after a bit. I told him that his wife had come down to find him. He said, "Find her and tell her that I'm all right and I'll be home shortly." So I went back to our building, and she wasn't there, but then she and the ambassador arrived. The guards had seen the ambassador come out and had put him in a van on the floor, and they saw her and put her in the van, too. Then Bob Pugh came along, and he said, "I'll be down in a minute and we'll go and decide what we're going to do."

So I got some pencil and paper and we headed back to the embassy, and he took charge. He is a take-charge person. He's a decisive person, which is exactly what you need in that kind of situation. So the first task that I was given was to try to locate everyone, to find out the whereabouts of everyone, and that's what I did, and tried to check out rumors. You can imagine what it was. The explosion happened at 1:06, right after lunch.

What had happened is someone had driven a little truck loaded with explosives, right into the building, and the explosion happened from underneath the building. So a whole section was gone, and all the floors fell, and the whole middle section of the building was destroyed.

We heard that they were going to take some wounded to the old French Embassy on the east side, which had been blown up some time earlier in this continuing war, so I got a doctor and a jeep and two other people. Lisa was one of them. It took us a long time to work our way through the traffic. Everybody was coming to see our explosion; so we had to fight our way through.

We got out there, and nobody ever came, but it worked out well because it gave us a breathing spell. I was virtually the only person who had not been in the embassy at the time, so I didn't suffer the shock of the explosion. (The juniors were really shocked and distraught, as everyone was, and one was hurt in the explosion.)

Then it really began. We went back to the American University Hospital, where everyone was taken. I tried to get a fix on who was there and who wasn't and where we stood; the hospital promised that they would have this information for me at, I think, 8:00 that night. Meantime, I tried to visit the ones I could find, and see how they were and find out what their situation was, and note that they were there.

Then one of the doctors asked me if I would come to the morgue and try to help them identify a woman's husband. What they wanted was for me to look at the bodies and pick out two or three who could be her husband. I went in, and you know, they all looked alike there. They were all covered by a fine, gray dust. When you blow up a building, there's an awful lot of gray cement dust.

Q: *I've been involved after an earthquake. I went to a morgue after an earthquake in Yugoslavia, and people do look alike.*

DILLARD: Yes.

Q: *Faces get drawn.*

DILLARD: Yes, it's amazing. So the doctor said, "Of course, that's Bill McIntyre and this is Ragib." So I looked at them and I could say, yes, they were those people. So I thought, "Okay, it is possible to tell who they are."

I looked at all the bodies that were there, and I remembered that this man -- you know, the embassy was in an old hotel, and there was not that much exchange between floors or offices, so I didn't know all the people that well, even though I'd been there for six months. It was not an easy embassy in which to get to know people. But I knew her husband, and I remembered his teeth were kind of squared off. They came out in right angles almost. There was this one body, and I thought, "Well, that's his teeth. I know those are his teeth." And the top of his head was blown off and his middle was all open.

So I asked if they could put a cloth over his head, down across his forehead and one across his middle before they showed her. She came in and said, no, that wasn't her husband. I thought, "Well, if that isn't her husband, then I'm not going to be able to do this job." It was her husband. They finally found something in his pocket that she recognized as being his. But she couldn't accept it, you know.

Then after that, my job, of course, as consular officer came down to all the corporal works of mercy, visiting the sick, identifying the dead. I was very fortunate in that there was a young woman who was studying dentistry, who was also a Red Cross volunteer. She had a very clinical, dispassionate view of the bodies; she called me over once and showed me a row of teeth. It wasn't a mouth; it had become a row of teeth. She said, "Now, I think this could be an American filling, don't you?" I thought, "Well,. . ." I said, "It could be any filling." But that helped me tremendously. I realized that we weren't talking about people; we were talking about empty vessels. The people were no longer there. That made it a lot more possible to work with this.

I didn't realize how involved I was. I didn't even notice the odor in the morgue. I mean, some, but it didn't affect me that much. I was in there all the time. People would come in and not be able to stay, and they didn't understand how I could. My body protected me. My shock was -- I didn't realize I was in shock. I was kind of disengaged from the whole thing. I cared about the people, but I was kind of like an observer. That was the perfect shock to get, you know, because it was exactly the way to carry through. But I felt that I should be reacting, so I would try to go out for half an hour or

so on the corniche, the riverfront, with my dog every afternoon. The Marines knew where I was, but wouldn't tell anyone. I'd try to make myself cry, because I felt that this was right; I needed to do this. So that probably helped.

Then we got a message that [Lawrence] Eagleburger wanted to come out and collect the American bodies and take them back to the States. He wanted to come on Wednesday and leave on Thursday. I knew that this wouldn't work, but it took me a while to figure out why it wouldn't; that we wouldn't have the bodies yet. We wouldn't have everybody. So, finally, we dissuaded him, so he came Friday and went back Saturday.

Q: *He was the Under Secretary for Management, I think.*

DILLARD: I think he was, yes. In truth, we found the last body at 5:30 on Friday. I had been having the undertaker go ahead -- they embalmed the bodies -- go ahead and put them in caskets, because of the time constraints. We had 17 Americans. The caskets had to be lined in zinc, you know, because they were leaving the country. So I was having him do that as we went along.

Then we got a request on Thursday, "Can you verify that nothing has been added to these bodies or these caskets?" Because the President was going to walk in front of the caskets and maybe somebody had put an explosive in. Well, this was kind of -- how could I say, you know, "I'm certain there's nothing in there"? I couldn't do that. So I had to go back to my buddies at the hospital, the acting director, and say that we had to open all the caskets, and he understood, but the people in the morgue were very hurt, and I don't blame them. Because I'm saying, "I don't trust you," which was very hard, because we were certainly working together. But I didn't know how to look for explosives. I didn't know anything about that, you know.

Coming on the plane with Eagleburger were a number of people, one of whom was a military person. So we decided that this military person would be the one to look in the caskets, because we didn't know how to do this.

Then it dawned on me that after he's checked the caskets and bodies, what happens? They could still do something to them. So I convinced the DCM that I had to have some Marines to take to the hospital morgue to guard the bodies. I had two fire teams, I didn't want to spend the night with a bunch of bodies, you know. But we marched smartly up there. The Lebanese didn't want to let them in, because there was a bomb scare against the hospital. I had a fun time talking the Lebanese military into letting my Marines into their hospital.

Anyway, so we got there. We had 17 bodies, but one man was a Quaker and his wife decided she wanted him cremated and his ashes spread there. So we had 16 caskets to be checked. We had this poor man who had to -- they'd open a casket and he'd look in and say, "Um-hum." They'd say, "See?" and he'd say, "Um-hum." Then they'd close the casket. He didn't know any more about it than I did, you know.

Q: *Somebody had to at least go through the gesture.*

DILLARD: In the middle of this, a military team came with the flags to be put on the caskets, and

the leader said, "Well, what is this?" This was Friday afternoon. Here we hadn't yet found the last body. "I can't put up with this. I can't stay here all night doing this."

I said, "Well, they'll be here all night. They'll put the flags on."

"They don't know how to put the flags on."

I said, "Look, we've got a casket in there we don't have to open. That man's going to be cremated. They can practice with that one. Show them how to do it. Have them do it any number of times." He was really a grouch, but we got that squared away.

Anyway, I had to be back there at 5:00 the next morning because the ceremony at the airport was going to be at 7:15. The military chaplain wanted to go with me. He never showed up, so I finally went, getting there about 5:20, and the Marines were very glad to see me. The Lebanese military would not let the ambulances come to the hospital. The Lebanese asked me to please go talk to the military commander, which meant getting him out of bed, to get him to change his mind. Well, of course, he wasn't going to say, "Yes," and I wanted a lot of time. When I got back, the chaplain had gotten there, and he was praying over every casket separately, and I thought, "We've got to get this show on the road. Let's do it in the car." What we had to do was just terrible. Thank God we had these Marines, because we had to load a casket on this steel rolling bed, roll it down an incline, up an incline, down a very steep incline, and then up the street to the street corner, where there were so many newsmen and photographers. We had one hearse, the rest were ambulances and station wagons. We put two caskets to a vehicle. But in the station wagons, they wouldn't fit, and you had to kind of put one on top of the other. The handles had broken on the caskets because they were so heavy with the zinc linings. These poor Marines were laboring so hard. Then it occurred to me, "I'd better get up there and guard the vehicles. Somebody could put something in one of the vehicles." So I was standing up at the top of the street, observing the whole scene, and it was incredible. The undertaker was a very fat man. I mean, he looked like a movie character; he didn't look like a real person. The traffic was starting by this time. It was getting close to 7:00. He would direct people one way, and his assistant would direct them another way. All this was going on with the photographers and these poor guys sweating to get the caskets in with some kind of dignity. Well, I thought, really, if you loved Beirut and you died in Beirut, this was right. This was the way it should be. It was so Lebanese. We had one Marine for each vehicle, and I rode in the hearse because there was room for three people. The Marine who rode with me said, "The people who are in the Guard of Honor, who are going to move the caskets at the airport, are all lording it over everybody. Thank God I only had to do it at the hospital where nobody was watching."

We drove like maniacs, and photographers were in cars with sun roofs, and they were hanging out and would come screeching by and take photographs. The military didn't want to let us through, you know. There were checkpoints everywhere. I mean, it was just incredible.

We got to the airport, and here was this man who was concerned about the flags. He came over to the hearse. Of course, the caskets had slid up and down with the rough driving. He said, "Why do you have the caskets way up there? We can't get to those caskets."

I said, "Well, goodbye," and I left to join my embassy colleagues at the service, and then sweated

over where the honor guard going to drop the caskets.

But then that was just the beginning. You go through all that, and then you have to start to work. You have to rebuild your section, you have to find your files, you have to dig things out of the garbage. You have to try to reconstruct your immigrant visa files. You have to be there for your employees. The five employees I had left were distraught. You had to give them something to do while you were still trying to find the bodies. You had to run the section. It was very difficult. It was a very difficult time, and we didn't have an office, so I did it from my home and had to steal a typewriter here, a chair there, try to give the employees something to do.

Q: *So you were running the consular section from your home?*

DILLARD: Yes. I set a target date for reopening for consular business, because I felt that was important for the Lebanese, the whole of Lebanon, and certainly for the employees. U.S. policy was, "We're here. Life goes on. Business goes on, and life is going to return to normal." Nobody cared about anything in the embassy but the consular section at that point; so we had to operate. We had to process as many people as we could, and we had to do it every day. That, I felt, was very important for our foreign policy at that point.

Q: *What sort of support were you getting from the rest of the embassy?*

DILLARD: Everybody was in shock. A lot of people were wounded. As much support as they could give. I didn't get much in the way of office equipment. I had to go out and steal things. I'd go back to the old embassy. Because I knew these Marines, even though we weren't supposed to go in there anymore, I could go in and get what I needed and set up my office.

At this time there were so many concerns. We were still looking for bodies. We were still having to deal with the bereaved. Some people just disappeared; they just didn't exist anymore. You'd find maybe feet with beige socks or something like that. I had to suggest to people that they go home and try to figure out exactly what their beloved was wearing that day, including shoes and socks.

Q: *Now we're talking about visa applicants?*

DILLARD: Yes, there were visa applicants who were killed, there were employees who we never saw again, who may have been blown out to sea. So all these things continued, even though we were trying to set up operations and go on. We still had these concerns on behalf of Lebanese who disappeared.

Q: *I find it incredible that you were able to function at all.*
DILLARD: Well, we did. We did all right. We tried to get as much together in files as we could. It gave people something to do, you see. This was the big thing. I wanted the employees to be busy all the time, because they were very distraught. So I had them retype the cards that we had rescued. I had them make new cards. If all we had was a card, then we made a paper that Immigration agreed to accept. If people came to see us to ask about their immigrant cases, we'd ask them to bring us any papers that they had, like just a letter sending them packet three or whatever. We used that as the basis for the file. We built up files as best we could. Immigration didn't give us any

problem.

Q: *What sort of support were you getting from Washington, from the consular section?*

DILLARD: We didn't have that much feel that we were getting anything. We were just cut off. We felt like we were there alone. We were churning this out. It was probably not that the Department wasn't supporting us, but we weren't aware of it. I don't know. We had to have TDYers if anybody went out on leave, so we had to fight to get a TDY.

Q: *TDY is a temporary duty person from another post.*

DILLARD: Yes. We had to get out. The Department insisted that each one of us who was there come back on a rest and recuperation trip within two months, which was a good thing. For example, while the Eagleburger group was there, before that plane left, I asked that I be assigned a TDY consular officer to help me, because the two junior officers were really very psychologically wounded, and they had a lot of recovering to do. It took three weeks to get somebody. Now, I thought that was appalling. I think the only reason that they even got me anybody was that I came up with the name of somebody, and I don't know why I even thought of that person. It was one of the people who had worked for me in London, and I knew that -- well, I don't know. I just came up with his name, and I knew after I said it that, yes, he would be good. He would be able to step in and help me.

Q: *This is interesting, how an organization responds.*

DILLARD: We're trying to do better, you know.

Q: *They responded poorly. This is 1983, so this is not unheard of. We'd been through quite a bit of things.*

DILLARD: Exactly. I felt there could have been a better response, but I'm operating from a very self-centered view. We did get the TDYers in, we were able to take the leave that we needed. You could only go out once every five months, and you needed to go out more often because everything was so intense. But they couldn't send in that many people.

Q: *How long were you there?*

DILLARD: I stayed until August of 1984.

Q: *Did it move into more of a routine, or was it still very --*

DILLARD: No, we moved pretty fast into a routine, because that's the beauty of consular work. You get the visa request and you act on it or you don't act on it. You do your immigrant visas, you do your American services. I mean, we didn't have to go out and try to summon our wits to interpret the political situation or make démarches or anything like that; we just had to get those visa applicants processed.

Of course, we had tremendous fraud problems. We had to have a lot of guards to screen people before they came in. We moved from my apartment to another apartment right next door to my building, actually to just part of an apartment. It was so noisy. One of my forays into the old embassy was to steal some carpeting to put up on the walls and the floor to deaden the noise. It was just terrible. Of course, the system that the Seabees built for us, they built a wall with plexiglass in which they put interviewing holes. Well, the hole was down here or way up here. You couldn't really have a conversation, so you'd have to hang around the side to do your interviews. So the guards had to really screen people. But they became involved in fraud, and we just had so many such situations, it was very hectic.

We seemed to be going along very well, but then somebody would get a phone call and fall to pieces, and you'd just have to go over and embrace the person. The tension was incredible, even when we got into the routine. And the routine was what saved people. That's why I was very anxious to get a routine started for these employees, these locals, because they'd lost friends, it was their country that was going down the tubes, and the shock of the embassy being blown up was a tremendous shock for the people of Lebanon, because we were supposed to be invulnerable. So we got our routine going, and you had to work so hard, you didn't have time to think about anything else.

Q: *How about the threat of kidnaping?*

DILLARD: That first happened in March of 1984. The first one was the station chief. We were restricted. In December 1983, I did not like to go into town anymore. I tinted my hair dark and I wore scarves, and I tried to be very low profile. Everybody thought I was crazy, but I didn't think it was wise to go into town. Sometimes you had to. Then we started going with guards and drivers for our shopping or whatever. We didn't yet have the road blocked off. We didn't block the road off, as I recall, until they started kidnaping people. Then we all moved into the compound.

But the one man, Buckley, the station chief, really, he did not take any precautions. In staff meetings, he was always saying, "So and So was at such and such place three times this week. Now you know you're not supposed to do things like that." Well, he still had diplomatic plates on his car. He drove himself to work, he left at the same time, he came home at the same time, and it was as though he was inviting this. Another man lived in the same building with him, and he would call the embassy when it was time to come to work, and they would come with a guard to pick him up. It was a very hard thing for us when the kidnaping happened.

Q: *You came back after a very difficult time. What sort of -- "reception" is maybe the wrong term, but I'm thinking, professionally, was anybody picking your brains about how to do this? Were you able to pass on your experience of this very difficult time?*

DILLARD: Not right away. In the first place, one very bad thing happened to me. Right after the explosion, I was talking to Washington the evening of the explosion, updating them on the whereabouts of people as I could determine, and I said, "Could you call my family and tell them that I was home walking the dog, that I'm all right?" I was told, "Oh, yes. Oh, yes, of course we will." So then a couple of hours later, after I'd been to the hospital and I had come back, I said, "Did you talk to my family?" And the person said, "Oh, yes. They were delighted." They hadn't called

my family. Now, you know, it's one thing to not do it, but you could say, "Look, I'm sorry. We haven't had time."

So two days later, I happened to come home from a trip to the hospital before I went out to look for bodies again, and the phone was ringing. It was my brother-in-law saying, "Are you alive? We haven't heard anything." There was a big snafu -- I was dealing daily with the Department, yet, for instance, the FLO people didn't know and weren't told that I was alive.

Q: *Family liaison office.*

DILLARD: They were the ones who were dealing with the families, but they didn't know that I was all right. So that was very bad.

When I came back on that R & R that they made us take -- which was right; I desperately needed to get out of there -- I got a cold reception when I went to the NEA Bureau. It was not warm and not supportive at all. I tried to say a couple of things and was kind of ignored.

DAVID E. LONG
Policy Planning Staff
Washington, DC (1982-1984)

Mr. Long was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. He was educated at Davidson College, the Fletcher School and the University of North Carolina. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, Mr. Long studied Arabic and was posted to Khartoum. Subsequent postings were Jeddah and, for further Arabic language studies, Tangier and Beirut. Mr. Long became one of the Departments senior Arab and Middle East experts, serving in INR as Director and on the Policy Planning Staff. He authored several books dealing with Arab and Middle East matters as well as on Terrorism and Counter- Terrorism. His expertise brought him visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and the Coast Guard Academy. Mr. Long was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: Let's talk about the Policy Planning Staff. You were working there from '82 to...

LONG: '84, I think. My memory.

Q: Okay, but this is early on in the Reagan Administration. What was the role? In INR, these various jobs but particularly Policy Planning can mean a whole different thing in different times. I guess Shultz would have come on board about that time.

LONG: He was on board.

Q: How did Shultz use Policy Planning?

LONG: Policy Planning is, even more than INR, what the Secretary wants it to be. INR, quite apart from it being what the policy bureaus want it to be, does have continuity of the civil servants there who stay, and so they know more about a country than some brand new desk officer who's just getting used to his new country. Policy Planning Staff can be a power of influence or it can be nothing. Steven Bosworth was the head of it, a very nice guy. One of the early things I did was to write a critique on our policy with Lebanon, which I thought was really stupid. Again, I didn't criticize the policy; I took all of the public policy statements that Shultz made – they were written by Peter Rodman, who was on the Policy Planning Staff, because that's one of the major things they do, they house the real speech writer for the Secretary. I took them one by one and I smashed them. He would say in some public speech, "We must do this in Lebanon. Here are our aims and goals and blah blah blah." And then I would show why that was nonsense. I never mentioned the policy. I only looked at the argumentation. I didn't know whether I could get away with it or not, but we were not discussing, we weren't criticizing policy, I was just using logic against the argument. I thought, well, it's worth a while, let's see what happens here. Bosworth evidently fretted for about a week over it, and he let it go and it went through. I don't think it had that much influence on Lebanon policy. I think the Lebanon policy collapsed of its own weight soon thereafter, but at least it provided a new rationale for when we had to change our policy, why it was absolutely vital that we do so.

Again, I was in conceptualization. The ironic thing was that Peter Rodman, when Bosworth left, became the new head of the Policy Planning Staff. We got along very well. It was a very prestigious place to be. It was kind of boring, because it was to be long-term policy planning and there is no such thing. You don't have time, nor should you because things can change so that most long-term policy planning is irrelevant. So you either did very little or you would try to find things – I would anyway – where I thought it might possibly make a little difference. I think I had a marginal impact there, which marginal is probably as good as one could expect to have. One day I saw Bob Oakley down in the lunch room. I said, "What the heck do you guys do in antiterrorism?" because he was the ambassador at large for antiterrorism, and he said, "Well, you know, we don't really have a good Arabist. Why don't you come on down here?" So I went up to Peter and I said, "What if I jumped ship and go down and work for Bob?" and he was, I think, pretty overjoyed not to have this thorn anymore. So I went down there, I think, about '84 or '85, and I hadn't been there more than about three days when all hell broke loose.

This was when Jeremy Levin – you remember the name – he was a journalist, and he was kidnapped in Lebanon. He had escaped, so our office was supposed to make all the arrangements. Well, the military guy who was on the staff, a colonel, was off on a war game, or maneuver. He was the guy who knew all the people in the Pentagon and everybody. So Bob came and said, "Hey, David, take care of this," so I called up the Pentagon and I got this colonel and he said, "What's your fund cite?" and I said, "Fund cite? We don't have a fund cite? We don't have any funds at State." He said, "No, you're basically no ticket no laundry." So I said to Oakley, "What do I do now?" He said, "Call Ollie North." I said, "Who's Ollie North?" He said, "He's the guy that does counterterrorism over there at the White House." I didn't know him. Nobody did. This was before anybody knew him. I called him up and I said, "Hi. I'm Dave Long. I work for Bob Oakley. There's a problem. We don't have any money to pay for this plane." They wanted to fly this plane over to Germany with his wife on board and then pick him up and bring him back. He said, "No problem. Call this number and ask for...." I didn't get the name. I asked twice and still didn't get

the name. But things were breaking very fast, so I had to call the number. I hoped that the NCO or whoever it was on the other side would usually answer "So-and-so's office, Sir." He said, "[Inaudible] office, Sir," and I still didn't know and I said, "This is David Long. I'm with the Office of Counterterrorism at the State Department, and this is an urgent call. I need to talk to him right away." So he came right on the line and was very helpful. Within about two minutes the colonel called back and basically said, "Is there anything more I can do for you?" I figured I don't know who this guy is but he's got to have some rank. Well, he was the deputy to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was a three-star general, a lovely guy.

Well, that period in the middle '80s, as somebody said about history, it was just one damn thing after another. We only had a staff of, I think, eight or nine people. We were running all over the world, we were doing all sorts of things, we were task forces. I led a couple of emergency support teams, one on the Achille Lauro and one for the TWA hijacking. We were everywhere. It was totally exhausting but it was probably the most exciting time, I guess you could call it, in my whole career, because there was no standard operating procedure. This had never happened before in such a concentrated way. We were flying by the seat of our pants.

Q: The whole thing got quite sour on the operations over Lebanon, and it was sort of the Iran Contra affair as it impacted on terrorism in the Middle East. Did you get involved in that, and if you did, could you talk about it?

LONG: A little bit. Ollie was not a freelancer. He was a good Marine in that respect. The problem was that you don't give an unguided missile a blank check. So when he goes to his superiors and they say to him, "Ollie, don't tell me what you're doing. Just get the job done," you're asking for it. In my opinion, it wasn't Ollie's fault. I'd love to have a guy like Ollie working for me, but I'd want to know what he did every second of the day, because he would carry out what he thought was what he'd been ordered to do. I remember one time we had a group of relatives of one of the hostages and there were two contacts for them, me and over in the Near East Bureau another fellow. The two of us would trade off and trade off and nothing was happening and nothing was happening, and they got more frustrated and they wanted to see Bob Oakley. I was very much against this, so then, well, maybe they wanted to see the Assistant Secretary for the Near East, and he was very against it. We held out as long as we could, and finally they went to see Bob Oakley. It was a terrible visit, because they didn't want to see him, they just wanted to bellyache. I don't mean that snidely, because they were very frustrated. What I was afraid was going to happen happened.

After they saw him, who are they going to see when they want to see the President, because that's where this is going to go. They don't see these hostages getting out any time soon, and sure enough, they saw the Assistant Secretary, they saw the Deputy Secretary, then they saw the Secretary and that wasn't the happiest meeting. Then they saw Vice President Bush and then they saw the President. In the hall the President said to Ollie, "Ollie, we've got to get these boys out." I though 'uh oh', and sure enough those were orders. I am convinced that what he did in the Iran Contra thing was not done just as skullduggery for the pure heck of it. By gosh, his Commander in Chief said, "We've got to get these people out." Now I thought that whole thing was the most cockamamie idea I ever heard of. We were not officially told about it, so officially I don't know anything about it. Only a fellow whom I recruited to work for me – I was Deputy Director of the

Office for Regional Affairs, we had a Deputy Director for Functional Affairs and we had a Senior Deputy – we figured it out. I won't go into detail, but we figured it out, what was happening, and we told Oakley.

Oakley was not officially informed either, so he couldn't complain because he wasn't officially informed, which I think is why he wasn't officially informed. So he sent a letter to the Secretary but it never went through the normal channels. He just handed it to him in a staff meeting one day. Later on, when it came out and the FBI found a copy of that letter and they asked the Secretary, "What about this?" he said, "I don't remember ever getting that letter." Well, he never did officially. He knew what was going on too. I can't really go into much detail except that that gives you a flavor for Ollie North guy. He was a live wire.

He worked like a devil, and he would come up with a cockamamie scheme a day and he usually would run it by us, and usually I would tell him why I thought it was a cockamamie idea, although some of them were brilliant ideas. And if it were, he'd say, "Yes, I guess it was a cockamamie idea," and that would be the end of it. But on this one, I think here was a way he thought that he could really get these people out.

DAVID M. EVANS
Political Advisor to Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe
London, England (1982-1986)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: *During this 1982 to 1986-period, the early-Reagan and mid-Reagan period. You had John Lehman as Secretary of the Navy. It was probably the most aggressive period we had with the Navy, wasn't it? Could you talk about what our posture was in those days, Navy wise, and the politics thereof that you dealt with?*

EVANS: You're right. The Navy was without question, the most prominent of the four services, depending on how you consider the Marines. This was partly due to the Reagan force projection and partly due to John Lehman's particular emphasis on Naval expansion to contain the perceived Soviet threat. The Navy was, without question, the most interesting and active in long-range force projection of the three services. It was also the one in which there were the most political military questions that came to the attention of the Political Advisor or POLAD. I think we all know that many of these POLAD jobs are sleepy, quasi-academic jobs.

The job in London was extremely active, very hands-on, and very policy oriented. When I'm talking about policy, I'm talking about major policy initiatives throughout the whole area that the Naval Command in Europe encompassed, which was from the Northern area of Norway, right down through all of Europe, to the Mediterranean. It enhanced all of the Mediterranean, including the Sixth Fleet -- which was under my Admiral's command -- and the northern rim of Africa, namely Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, for what that was worth, Egypt, Israel, the Middle-East, right up to the Persian Gulf, which was under the relatively new Central Command, headquartered in Tampa. We dealt with all the European issues, all of the East-West issues because the European Command encompassed the Soviet Union fully. Anything to do with the Soviet Union and the Soviet threat and Soviet force projections, other than the Soviet fleet in the Pacific area, but anything dealing with the Soviet Union in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Soviet Union, on the ground, I would say, to the extent that the Navy had interest in that, came under our purview. It also included base-related problems, local problems and particularly the Arab-Israeli problems. Those were all within our purview. What was not within our purview was the Iran/Iraq situation, although our intelligence outfit located in London, which was probably one of the best military intelligence outfits in the world, actively followed all U.S. Naval force activities on a daily basis. Because of what I had been dealing with in my previous position as Director of International Security Operations and the State Department's Political-Military Affairs Bureau, many of these problems came to my attention as well, even though they were slightly outside our geographic confines. Technically, our purview went all the way down to South Africa, although during my tenure, we didn't go down there. I did travel extensively throughout Northern Africa. The major problem though, and the one that I dealt with immediately upon arrival and immediately before departure, was in the Middle-East. It was the Lebanon situation. As you may recall, the Israeli forces, in early 1982, had moved into Southern Lebanon and Palestinians had fled back either to Tunisia or to other places, and a war, initially a slow war, of political and military attrition began between Israel and Lebanon/the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization). That heated up considerably. But during the four and one-half years I was there, the underlying motif and the major activity, constant activity, was the Lebanon engagement, both in and out of Lebanon.

Q: *In the first place, I want to come back to this issue and several others. Just to begin with, how were you used? You had what, several admirals while you were there?*

EVANS: I used to joke that during the four and one-half years I was there, I served seven admirals. That was partly because of some double-heading that went on. There was a large turnover of admirals, including a well-known Admiral, Bill Crowe, who went on to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Let me go back and say, when I went out there, this position had been empty, nonexistent.

Q: *The POLAD position?*

EVANS: The POLAD position had been abolished two years before by the State Department in an effort to save money. It was felt by the State Department that they could adequately furnish political advice to the Navy across the street through their Political Section at the Embassy. The U.S. Navy was not happy with that because they wanted a full-time State Department representative who was responsible to the admiral, not to the ambassador. The decision was reached in late 1981 that in response to the Navy's demarche, and probably connected to this

Naval build up that we were talking about, to restore this position. I was the first POLAD to go out and reopen the position in 1982, after approximately, a two-year hiatus, in which there was no POLAD. That was both good and bad. It was good in the sense that I got a lot of attention from the admiral and the senior officers. It was bad in the sense that there was no infrastructure to build on. I had to open an office, create an office, hire a secretary, build up files. There was absolutely nothing to walk into. That took some time. Although I was very welcomed, I had to introduce myself and introduce my function. It wasn't as though I came in to replace somebody who was already active, and intertwined in the operations. That was the background under which I came in. At the time, the Naval Command for Europe was headed by a three-star admiral. It was separate from the NATO, Southern Command, which was headquartered in Naples, which is still, and was then, headed by a four-star U.S. Naval admiral.

Less than a year into my work, toward the end of 1982, the Navy decided they would double-hat the CINC/US/NAV/EUR, the U.S. National Naval Command with CINCSOUTH, the NATO Southern Command admiral. At the time that NATO four-star Commander was William J. Crowe, who came up to London quite a bit to visit because he had gotten his doctorate in London. He loved London, being of a scholarly turn. He visited frequently. Admiral Hays was the one who selected me, very carefully, I might say, in the interview process in January 1982. Having a son, who at that time, had recently joined the Foreign Service, he was more favorably disposed to the Foreign Service than perhaps a number of other senior military officers are. In any event, I was very fond of Ron Hays, who went on to become the Vice Chief of Naval Operations when the double-heading took place. The double-heading took place, as I recall, in late 1983 or early 1984. Admiral Hays, at that point, went back to Washington with a promotion to four-stars to be the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, VCNO. A new three-star came out to London who was no longer the CINC/US/NAV/EUR. He was the DCINC/NAV/EUR, the Deputy Commander in Chief for U.S. Naval Forces in Europe. Then, what to do with the POLAD, which was namely I? I was assigned to CINC/US/NAV/EUR, but CINC/US/NAV/EUR suddenly became Admiral Crowe down in Naples. Of course, he had his own other POLAD, who was the NATO POLAD. I, in a way, served two admirals. It was my senior admiral, who was the four-star CINC/US/NAV/EUR-CINCSOUTH in Naples and the DCINC/US/NAV/EUR, the three-star admiral in London. That is why I say, in the four and one-half years I was there, I actually served seven different admirals.

Q: *What would you do, in general? Then, we will move to specifics. What was the function of the POLAD, as the admiral and you sort of mutually recreated the job?*

EVANS: The POLAD position was largely what the admiral wanted to make of it as regards to requirements. Then, it was largely what I wanted to make of it as regards to the rest of the time or other matters. Typically, when I got there in February, the place was jumping because the Lebanon situation was already getting nasty. There were any number of political questions that Admiral Hays would ask me to look into, on a daily basis, and several times in many days. The questions were regarding our policy and what the State Department would think of this or that, and if we did this, what would the implications be. What was the political inclination of certain parties in Lebanon, and that sort of thing? There were a lot of trips. I spent, probably in that first year, particularly the first two years, I probably traveled two weeks out of the month with an admiral, sometimes by myself because I had rank and was able to commandeer an airplane for myself. I

occasionally went on missions with officers to Turkey, for example, where we were trying to establish an alternate base to Larnaca and Cyprus for military operations off of Lebanon. It was a very strategic position.

Typically, the day began at 9:00 with an intelligence briefing in the briefing room. The three-star admiral would sit in the first row, in the middle. His deputy was a two-star, and he would sit to his right. I would sit to his left. It established for all to see the ranking order of things. I, at the time, was an OC, I guess. As such, I was accorded, one-star rank which made a difference. There is a long debate about whether POLAD's should be senior officers or not.

Q: *They really respond to rank.*

EVANS: They do. They are told authoritatively by the bureaucracy that this person is a flag-rank official. There is a whole lot of difference. The day would start with a briefing by N2 (Intelligence), then N3 (Operations), occasionally N4 (Supply Logistics), occasionally N5 (Policy & Plans). Those were the major divisions that I would work with or how I was involved with things that I came in contact with. I did not, of course, get involved in personnel or administrative matters. It was strictly Naval. During the briefing the admiral would occasionally ask me questions on the spot which I would know or I would not know. If I didn't, I would promise immediately to find out. I would do that either by a memorandum or phone calls back to Washington, as soon as Washington opened, or I would work with one of the Ns in getting the information or the analysis, proposal, or the recommendation to him. I built on my recent connections with the Political-Military Affairs Bureau and particularly people like Arnie Raphel, who, when I went out, was working with the Under Secretary and with Larry Eagleburger with whom I served in Belgrade. Eagleburger had gone back as Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. I spent a lot of time calling back to Washington, getting opinions, acting as the liaison, as it were, for the admiral. The admiral used me in a very personal way. Nobody else, for example, had any authority to ask me to do anything. It had to come from the admiral. They certainly came looking for help, particularly when I worked closely with an N2 (Intelligence) and N5 (Plans). They would often come up to my room, and I was given a rather nice room, like Admiral Hays. We would sit down and go over maps and plans, and biographies, very often, and cross-fertilize ourselves, our knowledge base in both Intelligence and Plans & Policy.

Q: *Let's take the Lebanese crisis first. From your perspective, could you say how that developed, when you arrived? Also, how did the Navy get involved?*

EVANS: The Navy got involved because, for one reason, to protect the American citizens that were in Lebanon, to protect those forces in Lebanon that were judged to be on our side, to provide military support and security for Ambassador Phil Habib, who was shuttling back and forth as the Middle East negotiator. I'm trying to work this thing out between the Israelis, the PLO, and the Lebanese. The situation gradually got much more dangerous on the ground which lead to an increase buildup of our offshore naval forces. Then, it involved other countries including Cyprus, where we used the port of Larnaca as our forward operation base. Also, the desire to use Turkish facilities led me to be in the missions flying out to Turkey to try to negotiate that which did not work out. It involved closer cooperation with the Israelis in naval activities that I had not realized before. We did not particularly acknowledge the fact that we had a very active and substantive

cooperation program with the Israeli military and navy in anti-submarine warfare, in particular. Our forces were increased offshore and the Marines, as you recall, were placed in Lebanon. We worked with the Israelis in trying to make sure that the Libyans and others hostile to our interests did not come up and attack us under water.

Q: *Were you there when the Sabra and Shatila massacres took place?*

EVANS: Yes.

Q: *And the bombardment of Beirut, prior to that?*

EVANS: That's right.

Q: *Could you give me a bit of feeling about the attitude of our military, particularly toward the Israeli armed forces and the Israeli policy during that particular time? What were you getting?*

EVANS: Well, as far as I could see, our military had nothing but great respect for the Israeli military. Our military realized what the State Department did not realize: that there was a major threat looming from the other side, the Arab side. We had good intelligence sharing with the Israelis. I was very impressed with the amount of intelligence and good intelligence that their navy had about Iranian, Syrian, hostile Lebanese and PLO activities, that were very threatening to our forces and to our interests in the area. You had a dichotomy growing that lead to the split, just before the bombing of the Marine headquarters, which I guess was in March or April of 1984. The Defense Department had a better assessment than the State Department. The State Department was terribly naive about our presence. They were talking about having our military build basketball courts. They were trying to have it both ways. They were trying to go into a hostile environment from the anti-Israeli forces' point of view, and yet, act as though we were there merely as benevolent peacekeepers. Therefore, we should be opening dental clinics and building them basketball courts, and playing basketball. At the time that George Shultz was telling Casper Weinberger that we should be building basketball courts and opening dental clinics, Weinberger was being told by his people that the Syrians were building facilities in the Bekaa Valley with Iranian money, and planning to send trucks loaded with bombs to bomb our forces. This was days, if not weeks, before the horrendous bombing that took place. I happened to be back in Washington at that time for briefings in the Political-Military Affairs Bureau, so, I know whereof I speak on that issue. I at least feel I do.

Q: *In the first place, it was a complicated business. First, we put our troops in to help get the Palestinians out after the Israelis colluded with some right wing Christian militia, and went in and slaughtered Palestinian families. We had already used our troops to help pull out the Palestinian armed forces. Almost by reflex, we let our Marines back in, along with the French and Italians, I think. At that time, was there questioning at your admiral's headquarters about . . . "fine, but what is this about?" Later, this became a major issue . . . "What are we up to?"*

EVANS: Yes, I think it is fair to say as we have seen in the past, and we are seeing in the present day, that policy makers decided to use U.S. military forces to carry out activities that are not those directly related to what the military thinks it should be doing: some sort of peacekeeping or

separation of forces, or presence, or whatever you want to call it. You are right, with that mission, there was no tangible enemy to kill or beat. There was a great deal of frustration about being in an increasingly hostile environment where we could only take limited measures to protect our own forces. The purpose seemed to be just to hang on, while this nebulous process dragged on. This began with your question about what the military thought of Israel. I think the military perception was, and it certainly was my perception, based on all the evidence that I saw, that the PLO started the darn thing. The amount of hostile terrorist activity that came directly from Iran and Syria, as far as I know, is still going on. The creation and support of the training camps in Bekaa Valley were clearly supported financially by this Syrian/Iranian connection. This happened in the last few days of this stupid assassination attempt the Israelis did in Jordan. They occasionally bungle things and occasionally on a big scale. I think the perception that we were working under militarily was that this was a situation that had been brought on, as it normally is, by the Arabs' failure to adhere to proper behavior. Then, when you try to do something about it as police forces do sometimes in an urban riot, excessive force gets used and then all hell breaks lose. People forget the reason for the use of excessive force in the first place. That is the point I am trying to make. The PLO started it and certain things happened. But the given was that we were on the Israeli side. Whether they acted correctly or not the whole time was almost beside the point from the military point of view because they were our allies. They were and still are our NATO anchors. They are not in NATO, but they might just as well be.

Q: *Well, there were some confrontations with these Israelis. One always thinks of the Israelis' tank that one of our Marine officers jumped up on with a pistol to make him stop moving in. Were you getting any reflections or concerns about a fairly heated-up Israeli force that was pushing in, and we were supposed to stop it, particularly at the lieutenant level and all? Was this a concern?*

EVANS: Yes, in the sense that there was a concern that the situation was getting very ugly and messy. Neat lines of division as to who was the good guy and who was the bad guy, which is how the military likes to deal with it were disappearing. Of course, that doesn't always apply. It sure is not right in war. It was getting messy. There were a lot of doubts, as the summer of 1983 went on. I think it is fair to say that the U.S. military was increasingly unhappy with the civilian direction that it was getting because the mission became obscured. The mission seemed to be survival. Then, we had the major bombing which was a tremendous jolt to the headquarters and to everybody, including Admiral Crowe, particularly and all of us. There was this inevitable process of escalation. The Navy was not particularly happy with that, bringing in and dusting off the battleships, with the New Jersey bombarding the shore, which came later. I guess that was in 1984. We ruefully had to conclude that most of the shelling had missed its targets and probably more civilians were killed than anybody else. It was done for political purposes.

Q: *When this was going on, you say you talked with officials. Was most of this driven by Washington's activists saying, "Don't just stand there, do something?"*

EVANS: The whole thing was coming from Washington. The Naval command took orders. They didn't initiate anything. They grew increasingly unhappy with the orders they got and the failure to sense where this policy was leading, what the policy was, and if you could identify the policy, where it was taking you. When the Navy high command gets an order from Washington from the Joint Chiefs to carry out an operation, it is not as though I was asked what I thought about it. In

some cases, I was, before it happened. That was a rarity. By that time, there was no need to know what I thought. The main thing I got involved in was informing other governments that all hell was going to break loose. The admiral wanted to make sure that the other parties were alerted beforehand. It very often involved calling embassies, like our embassies in Rome and Athens, to coordinate with them or inform them. They were informed in other ways too, but I had that particular job. Something like the New Jersey, of course, we were told to do. The chain of command, which was a very important and significant military activity, in that this was the first time a battleship had been used since World War II. The orders went to CINC/EUR in Germany, then to US/NAV/EUR, who at that time, was in Naples, then to the D/CINC/NAV/EUR, who was in London, then to Commander of the Sixth Fleet in Naples. That was the way the orders went.

Q: *Was there any particular inquiry about responsibility for the bombing of the barracks and all? One of the issues was this very complicated command structure where people in London were essentially micro managing events on the ground in Lebanon. Was that a concern as this whole thing developed*?

EVANS: Of course, from the point of view of the Command in London, they thought that was absolutely appropriate because that is where the Naval command was, and the Sixth Fleet works for London. That is the way it is. As you probably know, there have been proposals for years to abolish the London Command. It was saved at one critical point by Eisenhower. There are many arguments about whether the Command should just be abolished and put down in Naples. You would have one Naval Command co-located with the NATO Southern Command. So, that's where the Sixth Fleet is. Why have they got to give way to London? We had some acrimonious disputes with the Sixth Fleet. There was a lot of unhappiness between the Sixth Fleet operational people and NAV/EUR, the London Navy Command people. It was a cumbersome structure. If it wasn't for the entrenched interests one would want to scrap London and put it down in Naples. One of the reasons why we can't is the security angle. I think we have always felt that we wanted to have our Naval Command located in Britain rather than Italy.

Q: *Well, there's the problem. I was Consul General in Naples, 1979 - 1981. If nothing else, you had the Camorra, which is the local Mafia that was a major problem there, among other things, as well as volcanoes, and earthquakes. While this Lebanon thing was going on, you were the liaison, for one thing, between our political-military in the State Department and the Near Eastern Bureau. Were you sensing a disquiet about developments in Lebanon at this time? Did you have the feeling that this had been picked up by higher ups, either in the White House or the Secretary of State, and all, and was getting out of the hands of the professionals or not?*

EVANS: My perception was that George Shultz, himself, who I consider a professional, felt that we should be more pro-active. The frustration I was privy to was the military frustration. They got caught between a rock and a hard place in this. With this policy, they were put in to do the job that they felt they should do, which is fight somebody and win, and then, get out of there. But instead, they were put in to stay. They were exposed increasingly to physical danger when it wasn't quite clear what they were staying for and where we were going, and what we were trying to do. The overriding frustration in the whole four years I was there, was about terrorism increasing from 1984 on. The focus of the Command was in combating terrorism. In 1985, we conducted one of the most successful counter terrorist operations ever in bringing the Achille hijackers down. It was

very exciting. I was very much involved with that as we tried to find the Achille Lauro.

Q: *Could you explain what the Achille Lauro situation was?*

EVANS: I'm trying to remember when it was. I think it was in 1985. The Achille Lauro was an Italian flag cruise ship which was hijacked by a band of, . . . I forget which group it was. It was one of the Palestinian groups.

Q: *It was the Abbas group or something.*

EVANS: Abu Abbas.

Q: *I don't know if you call it left or right wing, but it was not mainline.*

EVANS: It may have been the PLFP, Palestinian Liberation Front, Popular Front Liberation, or one of those. We all know, that there is the PLO and then there are all these other groups, certainly not doing something that the PLO disagrees with. Anyway, these hijackers boarded the ship to make a statement. In the process, they pushed a man named Leon Klinghoffer, who was in a wheelchair, off the boat, and to his death.

Q: *He was an American citizen and Jewish.*

EVANS: He was a Jewish American citizen. For one reason or another, they took a dislike to him, or he talked back to them, or whatever. He was chucked overboard. That brought tension to the whole thing. That is for sure. Then, the hijackers took off in a boat. We, in the Command in London, tried to find the boat. Well, obviously the Sixth Fleet was looking for it. But, the charts and the reporting responsibility were up in London. I remember sitting with the intelligence people in our big room with a map, pinpointing all the . . .

Q: *When you say the boat, you mean the cruise ship?*

EVANS: No. Well, yes, the cruise ship itself. For a while, we couldn't find it. I forget the entire series of events. But the hijackers made their way to Egypt. They left Egypt in a plane and we intercepted the plane in midair. That was extremely exciting. That was directed by the Operations people working with the Intelligence people in London. Eventually, the plane was brought down, escorted down in Italy.

Q: *Sicily and Sigonella.*

EVANS: I see that you are well aware of this.

Q: *Yes, it was a major incident.*

EVANS: I got involved, at that point in liaising with the Italians and others. It was tremendous that it was happening so fast. Well, as you may recall, the Italians were highly embarrassed that this happened. Instead of this event being welcomed, it was a major political embarrassment for the

Italians. They eventually ended up letting the hijacker go, as I recall.

Q: *They let Abu Abbas, but not the hijackers themselves.*

EVANS: That was infuriating to the admiral and the military, of course. There was this constant problem that if you catch somebody, and it's true in local police work here too, you finally catch the bad guy and then due to one thing or another, social pressures, or whatever, you have to let him go. It is very frustrating for law enforcement authorities. Nevertheless, the mid-air interception was a great achievement by the U.S. Navy. That was one of the highlight operations that took place at the headquarters. After the bombing of the Marine barracks, the attention of the Command was really more and more focused on counter-terrorism. That was the thrust of every daily briefing. That was the thrust of the intelligence activities. That was something I was brought into increasingly. I was amazed at how much evidence there was of both the Iranian, and particularly the Syrian, support for all of this terrorism. Much has been written about that. We have never acted with the Syrians in the way I think we should have given the hard evidence that we had about their support for terrorism. That is another issue.

Q: *Did you sense a frustration while sitting in on briefings and planning? A navy is not designed to combat terrorism, as an army is not designed to do that. You do the best you can. Did you sense real frustration on the part of our military that you were looking at?*

EVANS: Of course, absolute frustration and hostility to our own political decision makers, who, in the opinion of the military, were not acting on the intelligence that we either knew or developed. They were simply letting these terrorists continue. That was the major frustration, plus being sitting ducks. Until we were taken out of Lebanon. Still, there was a feeling by the Navy that they were being used for political reasons that were not necessarily clear and could not necessarily be justified. These were political decisions that were taken by civilians comfortably sitting back in their plush offices in Washington or having a drink in the Army-Navy Club discussing the death of young men at sea. That was the feeling and it was a very strong one. In a sense, I shared that frustration with them. I must say, I developed a very high regard for our Navy.

Q: *Were you involved with, or was it on your watch, when there was the bombing of Libya*?

EVANS: Yes, that was one of the last things. That was in April of 1986.

ROBERT B. PETERSEN
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Tel Aviv, Israel (1982-1986)

Mr. Petersen was born and raised in Ohio and educated at Oberlin College. He entered the USIA Foreign Service in 1965 and served as Public and Cultural Affairs Office in Embassies or Consulates in Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Mauritius, Israel, Morocco and Cote d'Ivoire. He also served in several senior USIA positions in Washington, D.C. Mr. Peterson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in

2001.

Q: What was the state of American-Israeli relations in '82 and how would you describe Israel at the time?

PETERSEN: The key thing to remember is that this was the Israeli move into southern Lebanon.

I had left Mauritius in January of '82. The intent was that I was going to study Hebrew until late in '82 before being assigned as CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer) to Tel Aviv. I had begun my Hebrew language training in Washington. I think I was at about chapter 12 or 13 of the FSI book. I think there were 24 chapters. Suddenly, I got a call on a Wednesday morning in June telling me that I had to get to post that coming weekend. I really hadn't been planning to go for another five or six months. My wife and I were in the midst of house hunting to buy our first house. I politely said, "This is quite a change. I'm not prepared to go. This isn't what the plan was. No thank you." I got another call shortly thereafter, an hour or so later, from someone higher up the food chain who said, "You ought to get there this weekend." I again politely declined. By midday, I got another call from the deputy area director at USIA. He said, "Remember, you're in the Foreign Service. You either go where you're told when you're told or you resign and get out. That's your choice. We want you there this weekend." I got there that Sunday. From Wednesday to Sunday, I shifted gears. This was June of '82.

The reason for that was that the CAO in Tel Aviv, Sally Grooms, had been suddenly selected to do something for USIA, to take charge of a new youth exchange program.

Q: I was interviewing her yesterday. She is now Sally Grooms Cowl.

PETERSEN: I don't know if she described that part. I was just tangentially connected to it. As I was told before I got to Tel Aviv, the USIA director wanted her immediately for this position to start up a new project. This was Charlie Wick. The ambassador in Israel had said he wasn't going to release his CAO until the new CAO was there to replace her. Thus, they told me to get out there that weekend, and arrive by Sunday to go to work the following morning. To make a long story short, I arrived that following Sunday. There was about a week where we were both there. Then Sally left to rush back to Washington to head up this new youth exchange project for Mr. Wick. I was in the position that I had wanted and been tapped for from late the previous year but I had to forego the balance of the language training.

In June of '82, there I was, the new CAO in Israel. What was it like? What was our relationship like? The Likud had just recently come to power. Menachem Begin was the prime minister. This was a tectonic shift for the Israelis. The Labor government was out after so many years in power. The new Likud and everything that it represented in political thinking and in sociological/cultural outlook was quite a shift for the Israelis and our government, which had an excellent, close relationship with the Labor government and politicians and was hard at work maintaining that type of relationship with the Likud government. At the time I arrived, the job of the embassy was to make sure that there was good understanding, that they understood us, that we interpreted properly and correctly what the Israeli government was doing. That to a large extent was exactly what was happening, although both Israelis and we Americans were perhaps concerned and at times baffled

by the efforts in Lebanon.

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Q: This was the peculiar thing where our consulate general in Jerusalem reported straight to Washington.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: There was a certain rivalry.

PETERSEN: From what I observed under Ambassador Lewis and then later under Ambassador Pickering, I wouldn't use the word "rivalry." There was a certain recognition of the importance of maintaining a sense of independence, but rather close cooperation, not rivalry. But I know that is an issue and a lot of people might want to depict it as rivalry and have good explanations as to why, but from my point of view, it was really cooperation.

Q: It also depends on the personalities, particularly of the consul general and the ambassador.

PETERSEN: Yes. Wat Cluverius and Brandon Grove were the CGs (Consul Generals). They attended the weekly country team meeting in Tel Aviv. They would sit next to the ambassador. There was a sense of emphasizing both their independence and their importance and their relationship with the embassy. No effort was ever made to trample on that independence.

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diplomacy with Phil Habib. I had actually met him in Saigon. He was head of the political section there. He played a key role in trying to establish the negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal. Much of the embassy support went into that. My colleague, Arthur Berger, the press attaché, must have spent 95 percent of his time on that, speaking to the press every day at the sites of various talks and negotiations.

I, on the other hand, was spending 99 percent of my time, if not 100 percent, on other things. The cultural program that I was responsible for was not a part of the embassy resources being applied to helping resolve the Lebanon issue.

Q: When somebody arrives and is new on the block, often they can sense the mood clearer than somebody who has been there. There is a difference. Did you find any disquiet among the officers over what the Israelis were doing?

PETERSEN: Yes. In general, yes. A great deal. First of all, in the largest sense, there was concern about U.S. interests in the area and concern about stability in the Middle East. But also concern that the Israelis weren't doing something that was in their own interest. A great deal of disquiet.

Q: In your cultural activities, what were you getting from your contacts? I am told that in Israel, it's vibrant and if nothing else, everybody is articulate as all hell.

PETERSEN: The same sort of disquiet. Articulate, very vocal expressions of concern from some of the contacts. Others expressed general frustration and determination and a sense of being absolutely pushed to the limit, that something needed to be done, that they couldn't put up with the constant threats, that terrorist activity, the bombardments, the harassment in the form of shells landing in their kibbutz and so forth up in the north. A real anger, determination to accomplish something, but perhaps also a recognition of how hard it would be to target the right enemy. It was the entire gamut of feeling.

Q: What were we doing on the cultural program?

PETERSEN: The two libraries had excellent research facilities and were in great use at providing material for scholars and journalists and people in the arts and so forth. We were busy - the word "showcasing" comes to mind – providing insights into American thinking and developments, individual arts and the performing arts. When I arrived, one of the very first programs – I hadn't set it up, but Sally left and I got to manage it and take whatever managerial bows – there was a major dance company that came over. We were involved in bringing theater people. At the Tel Aviv Museum, we had a Gottlieb exhibit, a major effort to showcase an aspect of the American visual arts. We had the dance company I mentioned. We got involved in everything over the course of the four years in the realm of the arts. Opera. We brought over Sarah Caldwell. We had a variety of street theater companies. I used to work with a number of the Israeli dance troupes, theater groups, to facilitate their efforts to show the development of the arts in Israel to the American audiences in the U.S.

We had the IV program. The program we had was a major resource for the embassy. We had great involvement from the political section, the economic section, the DCM, Bill Brown, and then Bob

Flatin, who later was ambassador in Rwanda. The DCM was involved in our IV selection committee. In some embassies, it becomes a stepchild of the CAO. USIS may jealously guard the IV program, and give lip service to making it nationwide. But in Tel Aviv, it was absolutely mission-wide and there was great participation not just in the selection of grantees but in the prepping of them for their visits to the U.S. and their debriefings and the follow-up activities with them. We had quite a number traveling.

We had a fantastically adept FSN, Helena Michelle, who administered the IV program and relieved me of a great deal of the administrative burden and allowed me to focus more on the substantive issues of searching out and evaluating good grantees.

We had a very important academic scholarly exchange program. We had the Fulbright effort, the USIEF, the U.S.-Israel Educational Foundation. The executive director was Dan Krauskopf, who had been there for decades. It was a marvelously administered program under Dan's leadership. We had a six-person board with three Americans and three Israelis. The DCM was one of the board members. There was a professor who had come from Columbia University who was in Jerusalem at Hebrew University. And I was the third American board member. We had three Israeli counterparts. We had a vast array of scholars who made a real difference in scholarly exchange between the two countries. I'll mention that the Fulbright program there really was a significant force in academic exchanges. Every year, we would go through the roster of applications for grants for Americans to come to Israel. I remember instances of American scholars explaining that it was essential for their careers, not because they were scholars of Israeli history, but people in scientific fields, and theoretical mathematics. They would say, "It's essential that I spend time at this or that institution in Israel for the development of my own career, my institution's development, and so forth." There were good and close ties.

I suppose I could sum up my life there as CAO. Kioko and I look back on that as one of the most hectic times of our lives, one of the most intellectually stimulating assignments I had in the Foreign Service. Every evening it seemed, I was out at some event or other mixing, meeting people, either at the theater, at a performing arts event, gallery openings, whatever, out mixing and hearing, talking to intellectual/cultural leaders of Israel. It was very exciting. We used to treasure our Friday evenings, the beginning of Shabbat would be the one quiet evening of the week. After dinner, sometimes we'd go and have dinner outside the house, but more often than not, after dinner, we would then go out and sit around over coffee and fruit with personal friends and have a relaxing evening. But it seemed as if the other six evenings of the week were all business, out working. But I loved it. When I left Israel after four years there and had to come back to Washington, it was such a downer. After the intense life that we lived there, returning to the routines of Washington was such a contrast and such a disappointment.

Q: Because of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent activities there, was it hard to get American cultural types to come to Israel?

PETERSEN: No. I suspect now it's much more difficult.

I think it's difficult now because of the security concerns, the danger. Yes, there were people who would express concern about the danger of visiting Israel under some sponsored program. That did

happen occasionally, but it doesn't stand out as anything significant. I remember much more clearly a couple of cases of Mauritians in my previous assignment who had expressed misgivings about visiting the U.S. because of the danger in the U.S., the danger of violence in our society. I remember that more than I remember the Americans expressing concern about visiting Israel. Both Kioko and I noted when we first got to Israel that in the first few weeks, we were very conscious of security issues – having bags checked when we'd go into a supermarket or a mall or things like that, the sight of the reservists on weekends going home, traveling with their weapons. You'd see kindergarten groups always accompanied by an armed guard. But after a few weeks, that became so routine that you didn't pay attention to it. But at first, I was certainly aware and took notice of it.

Q: Was there any feeling that you were getting either from the embassy or Israeli contacts about the settlement policy?

PETERSEN: The wonderful thing about Israel is that, unlike some countries where people are somewhat reticent to talk about things, in Israel, I don't recall anybody ever saying, "Oh, I don't want to discuss this or that." Not only were people willing to discuss it, they were willing to proselytize you with their view and try to win you over. From Israelis, I heard expressions of deep anguish and despair about the settlement policy in the West Bank and how it would inhibit any eventual accommodation with Arab states or with Palestinian nationhood. Then I heard others who said, "It's our land and we certainly should be entitled to live anywhere in our land." In between those two extremes, every expression you could imagine. After all these years have passed, I don't recall one or the other of those two diametrically opposed viewpoints being more predominant than the other.

Q: It seems to me the society is quite divided.

PETERSEN: Quite. In the election results of certainly the last three decades have shown that even when there was a shift in power. When I was there, there were calls for power sharing, national unity governments, which are a recognition by any political system that you have gridlock or near gridlock and that there's not going to be one side or the other gaining sway.

Q: How about visitors? Were you deluged with them?

PETERSEN: Yes. You've heard the jokes that for an American politician to have the "three I" visits: Iowa, Italy, and Israel. Yes, we had CODELs constantly. It seemed that Israel was setting a world record for CODELs. This was one of the things that made working in our embassy there as a CAO so delightful, the fact that Washington paid attention, that it cared. I use the IV program as an example. There was great interest in who traveled on that IV program not just from within the embassy or within USIA but other parts of the U.S. government where they were very interested in who some of the IV grantees were and where they would travel in the U.S. and appearances they would make and so forth. I had the opportunity as CAO to be involved in some of the CODELs, taking groups around, traveling with them. It added a great deal of spice to the work. It was important. The situation there is so nuanced and difficult to understand and appreciate. I think it was really important for members of Congress to visit, to see for themselves, and for as many Americans as possible to visit. It's one thing to look at the maps and read about the issues. It's quite another to see for yourself what the West Bank consists of, the topography of Jerusalem. It

helps your understanding to stand there on the hillside and look at it and begin to grasp what it is and certainly to visit places like Gaza and elsewhere.

One of the things that really was important while I was there… I worked for two different PAOs. For the first two years, it was Maurie Wee. The last two years was for Howard Lane. Particularly under Howie, we were able to use our program, make an effort to reach out to more of the Arabs living in Israel to get them more involved in our programming, going up to Nazareth, a city preponderantly Arab, and doing more of our programming up in Nazareth, trying to reach out to Arab-Israelis, and involve them, get them involved in our programs, get them into the IV program. In the Fulbright program we looked for opportunities, sought ways to support Arab scholars. I'm not referring now to the non-Israeli Palestinians. I'm referring to the around 17-18 percent of the population of Israel that was Arab. We tried to make sure that the program was inclusive and reached out so that the same things we were communicating to the Jewish people of Israel we were trying to communicate to the Arabs of Israel and to get them involved in traveling to the U.S. in the same way and participating in programs and learning about us.

Q: Did you have any problem with the Israeli government with this particular thrust?

PETERSEN: No.

I recall another thing that was significant the last year or two I was there. Based on some research that we were able to do and get access to, we determined that the generation growing up in Israel, the generation in school, was less open to democratic ideals than the previous generation. We consulted the ministry of education about this, talked about it among ourselves, got involved with some American think tanks and others, and developed a project in USIS to try to help revise the educational curriculum by including more material on multiculturalism, on the ideas of democracy and so forth.

I don't want to give the wrong impression that the work of the CAO was all going to the theater and dabbling in music and dance. We were trying to bring about changes that were in the interest of the United States and that were for the betterment or in the interest of Israel, trying to support efforts where we had the cooperation of the Israeli government in trying to bring about some changes using soft power.

Q: You mentioned that the next generation was not as attuned to democracy. Was it just that Israel was becoming more Middle Eastern?

PETERSEN: I would approach it a different way. A few minutes ago I described it as the young generation being less open to democratic ideals. I suppose I should just say "less tolerant" of differences. What we sensed from our focus groups, polling, and other research was that the coming-of-age generation was just not as open and as tolerant, rather, they showed an inclination to be less tolerant than the preceding generation. They were drifting away perhaps from the founding ideals of Israel. I don't want to over-dramatize that, but there was a sense, a concern, and we tried to address that.

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Q: What was the state of American-Israeli relations in '82 and how would you describe Israel at the time?

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GEORGIA A. ROGERS
Deputy Director, Citizens Emergency Center
Washington, DC (1982-1996)

Ms. Rogers was born and raised in Denver, Colorado and was educated at the Northern Virginia Community College and the University of Hawaii. Entering the State Department in 1966 as a Clerk Typist in the Bureau of Public Affairs, she later transferred to the Passport Office. For the rest of her career, Ms. Rogers served in Passport issuing offices in the United States and abroad, first as Clerk Typist and later as Regional Director. From 1982 to 1996 she served as Deputy Director of the Citizens' Emergency Center. Her final assignment was Managing Director of the Passport Division. Ms. Rogers was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: *I was interviewing somebody the other day who said that they had - I'm not sure if I've got the name right - Peggy Sales, who's -*

ROGERS: Peggy Say. Peggy Say.

Q: *Peggy Say who was the sister of Terry Anderson.*

ROGERS: Right.

Q: *Who was the longest Beirut prisoner -*

ROGERS: Right.

Q: *Associated Press or something.*

ROGERS: AP. That's right.

Q: *Who was considered some of the greatest cross that anybody had to bear, and people assigned to her on a daily basis. Did you get involved in that?*

ROGERS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. That was our office. Peggy was of the opinion that the more she could keep her brother's name in the press, the higher visibility she could make him, the faster the bad guys would let him go. So she did everything she could to let that happen. And we would talk to her once a day, twice a day, whatever. And for a time, we did have different people as her contact, and then I think we eventually just had one or two people. Because having too many people as a contact, you kind of lose the train of thought, let's say. And that's not good, so we eventually just had a couple of people.

Q: *I understand that when he was released, Terry Anderson did not immediately bond with his sister.*

ROGERS: Well, not the way she probably envisioned. She thought he'd come out and, you know, gee, we'd be brother and sister, rubbing shoulders together for the rest of their life and all that. And of course, he had other things in mind. You know? He had his own life to go on to. He didn't want to go down and live on the homestead with her any longer. So, yes.

Q: *It's difficult.*

ROGERS: Yes. Yes.

ERIC J. BOSWELL
Temporary Duty
Beirut (1983)

Eric J. Boswell was born in Italy in 1945. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Stanford University in 1970 he served in the US Army from 1967-1969. His

career has included positions in Dakar, Quebec, Beirut, Amman, and Ottawa. He was interviewed by Edward Dillery in November 1998.

BOSWELL: About a month after I came to EUR/EX, I was up in the office of then assistant secretary for I guess Administration but it might have been Diplomatic Security, Bob Lamb, and the executive director of NEA, a man named Mac Erlack, was talking to me. We were up there to celebrate the promotion of some administrative officers. Embassy Beirut had just been blown up about three days before and he asked me if I would go out there on TDY to help out, and I agreed. It was quite an experience. It was the first of many, many trips to Beirut during the course of my career. This was right after, as I say, the second bombing of embassy Beirut. It was a very deadly one; not quite as deadly as the first one but still very deadly.

Q: *Who was the ambassador?*

BOSWELL: Reg Bartholomew was the ambassador. I started to say it was the first of many trips and it was the first of many helicopter trips into Beirut from Cyprus. I've done it many times since. That's a whole story in itself but I remember arriving on the helicopter at a time of extremely high tension. I was the only passenger. I was hauled off the helicopter by a U.S. Army special forces officer who had been there on a training mission. He was hauled in from the countryside along with all his colleagues to provide some sort of security to what was left of the U.S. embassy. He hauled me out of the helicopter; the helicopter hovered, it never touched down. He sort of basically threw me to the ground and then dragged me into the nearby building which was the hulk, the remains of the embassy. This was quite an introduction.

I got to walk through the building. It was totally shattered with glass everywhere. It looked like a bomb had hit it, as a matter of fact. I learned a lot in that trip about the physics of a bomb and what it does to a building. It causes as much damage going in from the back side of the building as from the front. Bloody hand prints were everywhere on the staircases as people evacuated the building. It was quite a scene, a very difficult thing.

I remember going into one office and being handed a purse that belonged to, I believe her name was Yvonne Ray who was the personnel officer at the embassy. She had been severely injured and medevaced and this was her purse that had been found in her office. Apparently it had been lying on a safe, a file cabinet, next to her desk when the bomb went off. This purse was utterly shredded; it looked like fishnet. I remember bringing that home to NEA at the end of this TDY to give to Yvonne Ray who I think lost the sight of one eye at least. It had been very, very damaged. I remember what it was like to carry that purse.

It was explained to me by the engineers that essentially the inside of those offices had turned into a sort of Roto Rooter of flying glass and worse than that, flying staplers, drawers and pieces of furniture and everything else. That's what caused all the casualties. It wasn't the bomb itself it was all this other stuff flying around. It gave me a great appreciation for mylar, reduced fenestration, and various other things that I became involved with afterwards.

Q: *Does that really help?*

BOSWELL: Yes, it certainly does. Reduced fenestration really helps. Of course the only thing that helps utterly is setback. Mylar doesn't help much when the bomb is going off right outside the window and it may not have helped much in the case of that particular explosion but it certainly helps in other cases. The reason for the number of casualties at el-Khobar some years later was that it was just glass flying around the building. I think that was one of the major significant oversights on the part of defending those airmen who died, that there was no protective film applied to the windows.

Q: *That's a fairly simple thing.*

BOSWELL: It's a very simple thing and, in fact, I've just had it done at PAHO [Pan American Health Organization] where I work now. I don't think that there is going to be any threat of a terrorist attack on the Pan American Health Organization, don't get me wrong, but we are right across the street from the State Department and we are a building that is entirely glass. If there is ever a significant bomb attack on the State Department, that's where we are going to get hurt. We are going to get hurt from the peripheral effects of the explosion and I want to minimize those.

Q: *What did you do on that trip to Lebanon?*

BOSWELL: I really didn't do much of any great significance. Joe Melrose, the executive director of NEA, and I were there. We were both pretty high level TDYers, senior-ish administrative officer, but we were mostly just helping to clean up and really trying to provide a sense of Washington support. I ended up moving furniture around with a bunch of bearded Shiite laborers who had come to the embassy to work. They had crossed the Green Line in the process at probably extremely great risk. They showed up more or less for work every day and were my construction team and my moving team. I supervised them and they were awfully good workers. I think any administrative officer in Beirut will tell you that the Shiites are the best laborers, the best workers.

Q: *What did you leave when you left?*

BOSWELL: Most of the clean up and the putting it back together was being done by embassy staff that were still there, not by we TDYers. The embassy staff were naturally in something of a state of shock but they also had sort of a gallows humor which I think was healthy in terms of helping them deal with an explosion which after all had injured a great many of their colleagues and killed about ten people. I remember for example the first day I was there coming out of the shattered hulk of the embassy and looking at the enormous crater that had appeared in front of the embassy which is where the Chevy Suburban full of explosives had gone off. It was quite a nightmare scene. Anyway the GSO, Mike Fink, had brought in a truckload of white sand from somewhere and dumped it in the bottom of this crater just to cover the bottom of the crater. There was a charred palm tree, or what was left of a palm tree at the edge of the crater. He put a beach umbrella in the crater and was having pictures taken of the staff in the bottom of the bomb crater. Make what of that what you will but it is a way of dealing with the shock and the horror of the moment. I thought that that was a hell of a courageous group of people who were working there.

At that time spouses were still allowed in Beirut but they were removed after that bombing. There were no children but there were spouses. That event probably had more of an effect on morale at

the embassy than anything else. Spouses did not want to leave. The husbands certainly did not want them to leave. The spouses were part of the deal, they felt part of the deal. They were all working in one way or another, officially or unofficially, and to be evacuated to Cyprus and to leave the employee behind was extremely difficult. I think morale plummeted after that decision. Having said that, that is the decision I would make in that situation though I saw what the affect was.

STEPHEN BOSWORTH
Policy Planning Staff
Washington, DC (1983-1984)

Ambassador Bosworth was born and raised in Michigan and educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1961 he served abroad in Panama, Madrid and Paris before becoming Ambassador to Tunisia, where he served from 1979 to 1981, to the Philippines (1984-1987) and to the Republic of Korea (1997-2000). The Ambassador also was a member of the Department's Policy Planning Staff, and he played a major role in the US-Japan Foundation and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In 2009 Ambassador Bosworth was named the President's Special Representative for North Korean Policy. He was interviewed by Michael Mahoney in 2003.

Q: You had mentioned when you were in policy planning that that was an item that Marine bombing that you had to pay a lot of attention to in its aftermath. In looking back at it now, who do you think did that? I mean do you have a best guess as to who?

BOSWORTH: I have no ideas as to the organization that did it, but I think it was Islamic extremists.

Q: Rather than simply the Syrian military for example wanting to push us out?

BOSWORTH: No question the Syrian military wanted us out and we know that Syria has provided support over the years particularly Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. There may well have been a Syrian hand in all this, but I think that the people who drove the truck and blew themselves up and planned it represented some organization of Islamic fundamentalism.

Q: Do you think I mean did they see us at all as interfering in a way in the internal affairs in Lebanon by appearing to favor the Christian president?

BOSWORTH: They saw us as yes, and they also saw us as supporting Israel and of course Israel was massively intervening and engaged in Lebanon. This was where Sharon first rose to power.

Q: You were talking about the bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon and the fact that Israel was massively intervening in Lebanon right at the same time and so what might have precipitated?

BOSWORTH: I think the presence of the Marines, they were there for a whole series of reasons, but it was really a symbol of U.S. commitment to the Middle East and that presence, that symbol drew the attention of the Islamic fundamentalists. It turned out to be an easy target, far easier than it should. This came just after somebody had just blown up our embassy as well in Beirut.

Q: In fact, wasn't the embassy actually blown up twice or one was blown up and then another, they moved and that was also blown up. I mean was the presence of those Marines unthought out in a sense of really what they were doing there?

BOSWORTH: I think so. Yes. It wasn't clear why we needed Marines there. Were we going to attack somebody? Probably not. It was sort of the U.S. flag planted and of course when they were hit it was just a devastating blow.

Q: Was it immediately decided thereafter that any further presence would have to be pulled out, that it wasn't worth making an effort. How did that process go?

BOSWORTH: I don't recall all of the details of that. I think there was a desire to get the Marines out because they had been so badly bloodied, but there was an understanding that we couldn't be seen to be turning and running even though this was a terrible thing. We still had national interests engaged and we had to stay.

WALTER B. SMITH, II
National War College
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Walter B. Smith, II was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1929. He graduated from Princeton University in 1951 and subsequently served in the U.S. Army as an officer. Mr. Smith joined the Foreign Service in 1958. His career included positions in Moscow, Frankfurt, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Berlin, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

SMITH: By accident I found myself working for the Pentagon -- not physically, but at Ft. McNair, housed in the National War College, with a very bright bunch of people.

Q: *Political options, and Weinberger was having a lot of fun dabbling in the political environment.*

SMITH: "Fun" is not the word I would use. Weinberger, in my limited exposure to him, seemed like a conscientious person who worried a great deal. He may, indeed, have worried about the possibility that this or that U.S. foreign policy initiative was going to go awry and he may have fought against the position of the State Department, both overtly and behind the scenes. But it would not have just been for amusement on his part but out of a genuine concern, justified or not. I was involved with the decision that got the Marines out of Beirut, which is where they should never have been in the first place, because they did not have a defined role. They were there for

reasons of "symbolism."

Q: *Why did they [the Marines] stay there? What was your impression of why they were staying there?*

SMITH: They were supposed to be implicitly a trip-wire, but we were not about to back up this trip-wire. There were so many combatants floating around Beirut who could easily trip over the "wire" that we were leading with our chin. The problem is that the United States did not take a clear-cut position -- this is just me talking -- in opposition to the Israeli operation in Lebanon which, at the beginning and with very limited objectives, was at least understandable, if not smart. We could be relatively neutral [about it], with justification. But then the Israelis misread our tea leaves and decided that, as far as we were concerned, they had carte blanche, and they went into Beirut. It was at that point that we should really have come out with strong disapproval and opposition. But we did not. We minced our words. What really shook things up, if you recall, was that horrible massacre at the Shatila...

Q: *And Sabra [refugee camps south of Beirut]*.

SMITH: That that happened in September 1982. That [massacre] personally upset President Reagan. Within a week or so, for the first time during the Reagan administration, the U.S. came out with a Middle East peace initiative, an all-encompassing peace initiative, which did not get anywhere. This upset the Israelis and was what we should have been doing all along. Enough said.

So sending the Marines into Beirut was a gesture, as I saw it, to help compensate for the fact that we had gone along with the Israeli invasion of central Lebanon, beyond the initial invasion farther to the south. The [Marine presence in Beirut] was pointless. The issue became how we could withdraw the Marines without loss of face and without demoralizing Lebanese moderates. That is where I came into the picture. I proposed that, for every Marine taken out, we should explain that we were sending U.S. military "training personnel" into Lebanon to assist the government of Lebanon in developing the military wherewithal to police its own house. I have forgotten what the other gimmickry was, but it was used by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the same day I proposed it, on a Saturday. He went to the White House, and he carried the day. Weinberger was not even present. The chairman obtained White House approval for announcing that the Marines were going to leave.

DOUGLAS R. KEENE
Deputy Principal Officer
Jerusalem (1983-1986)

Mr. Keene was born and raised in Massachusetts and graduated from Colby College. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967, serving first in Viet Nam and subsequently at Middle East posts including Jerusalem, Karachi, Cairo, as well as Amman and Muscat, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. His Washington assignments also concerned primarily Middle Eastern matters, including the

Arab-Israel problem. Mr. Keene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: All right. Now you were there in 1983. How would you describe the situation in Jerusalem in 1983, when you got there?

KEENE: A consulate that was very heavily focused on supporting the Habib mission, on trying to deal with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. That was Habib-Draper.

Q: That was Morris Draper and Philip Habib. Morris Draper…

KEENE: Who visited frequently, going shuttling around the area, trying to work out a deal after Sabra and Shatila to get the Israelis out of Beirut. And because the UN also had their regional headquarters at Government House in Jerusalem, and the involvement of UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) and UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization), and various other organizations, as well as the Israeli government—they came to Jerusalem very frequently.

Q: How would you describe sort of the attitude of the officers—American officers—you were dealing with about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon?

KEENE: Well, I remember one of them saying something to the effect that this was different from the Palestinians: the Lebanese shot back, and that sort of stunned the Israelis, because it really wasn't the Lebanese government—it was various factions, like Hezbollah….and the Palestinians. They were there too. I think by and large everybody saw it—and certainly after the Sabra and Shatila massacres—as orchestrated as much by Sharon as anybody else, and they certainly had no enthusiasm for the Israeli invasion.

Q: Well, what was happening in the Con Gen Jerusalem's area responsibility—was it eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank?

KEENE: It was actually all of Jerusalem, which gave us an opportunity to enjoy a bit of a window into Israeli thinking as well as Palestinian: and that was one of the really great things about being there. It was sort of two for the price of one. Many days you could have lunch with an Israeli official and dinner with a Palestinian—the only place, really, where you could get both sides, and it was endlessly complex and fascinating.

Q: You were there from '83 until when?

KEENE: '86.

Q: What were the Palestinians—You didn't have Gaza, or did you?

KEENE: No, we didn't have Gaza. That was covered out of Tel Aviv, although we went down there frequently, because there were just natural connections.

Q: What were the Palestinians doing during this period of time? I mean looking back—a rather

quiet time?

KEENE: Yes, in retrospect, yes. After the deal was struck to get the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) out of Lebanon, the focus shifted more to trying to restart the peace process. At that time, it sort of fell to the assistant secretary, Dick Murphy, to take the lead in that effort, so we did a lot of work on that, too. That actually became our focus—trying to understand what was going on in the West Bank and what it might take to promote some sort of progress in the peace process.

Q: This is the period of time when you couldn't talk to the PLO?

KEENE: That's right. And the Israelis—official Israel--wouldn't talk to us either. We were officially confined to the protocol and consular sections of the Foreign Ministry. But in practice, there were quite a few contacts, socially.

DAVID WINN
Political Counselor
Beirut (1984-1985)

David M. Winn was born in Texas in 1942. He graduated from Swarthmore College in 1964, received an MA from the University of Texas in 1966 and an MPA from Syracuse University in 1969. He served in the Peace Corps and then joined the Foreign Service in 1969. He has served overseas in Vietnam, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France and Senegal. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

WINN: We both went to Beirut, despite the Embassy having been blown up in April 1983. We went to Beirut in January of '84. Then the ultimate chapter in Lebanon occurred two weeks after we arrived.

Q: Well, let's see, first you were there from '84 until when?

WINN: January of '84 to the late going of '85, unfortunately. I only stayed a year and a half for the simple reason that soon after we arrived they did pull out the families. To answer your question, I only remained in Lebanon until it would have been May of, almost the summer, the summer of '85. The most painful thing I ever did in the Foreign Service was to leave Beirut early. I had no choice. My wife had been evacuated for over a year. It was preposterous. She couldn't walk. So, I mean it was out of the question to stay longer. It was outrageous from a family standpoint that I stayed as long as I did. We got there in January of '84. I remember Ryan met us at the airport. It was a night arrival and we drove past the smoking remains of the Marine barracks on our way into town. Remember, the Marine barracks had been flattened in November while we were in Tunis, and they were still smoking in January. I remember thinking to myself, "This may be more than what I wanted to deal with right now," as I drove through those dark streets. Little did I know what lay ahead. Ryan left on February 5th and the days to follow will be forever etched in my memory.

Q: This is '84?

WINN: '84. The Shia basically took over West Beirut on February 7th. Just after I arrived, William Buckley was kidnaped, and because of the shelling and the general violence, most of the embassy personnel – most, but not all – had been moved into an enclave, an enclave around the Embassy. However, many, including Buckley, were still living outside the enclave. We had been, remember our embassy had been flattened, so we were living in one floor of the British embassy. A great generosity on the part of the Brits. The Americans were living on one floor and there was an enclave around that little diplomatic quarter guarded by the American marines because the Americans were still living around town in apartments. On February 5th a huge battle broke out. The Shia broke out of South Beirut and the Lebanese army just pulverized the city with random shelling. On February 5th everyone had to move into the enclave into my apartment and any others, namely the consular officer's and the DCM's. So, all the embassy personnel moved into those two apartments. We endured a night of shelling down in the basement. You could hear the masonry crashing around. We didn't know whether the building we were in was going to collapse on top of us. Incredibly, most of us, again not all, moved into that little enclave and we stayed there for another year. We had seventeen people in one apartment, that sort of thing. But a few people did venture out to live outside again, including William Buckley, who was snatched as you know.

Q: William Buckley the…?

WINN: William Buckley, the station chief. He continued to live outside and was kidnaped. That's when we really did move inside permanently, only to emerge on rare occasions. It's hard to believe we were all still driving around in our own cars in those days. I was awaiting delivery of my car. Of course that was the last time we ever drove our own cars. After that we'd go out in armored Suburbans and that sort of thing, but each day after that, I remember thinking well into that year of 1984 that I could, off the top of my head, write a memoir and remember each day separately, as opposed to the blur of which was Dakar. The Ambassador then was a very controversial guy, Reginald Bartholomew, one of the more controversial figures. A lot of people didn't like him, but I did and we got along famously.

Q: What was his management style?

WINN: His management style was tight control – he had a bad temper, showed a lot of bluster, shouted at people – a real tough guy. I don't know why we got along so well, but we did. I think he had other fish to fry in terms of priorities, and he let me run my shop – good guy to work for in that regard. There was none of the later micro-managing I later came to detest at another post. When he'd go out he'd have an Arabic speaker (me), we went through some couple of tight spots together. I mean I can talk about my tour in Lebanon for the rest of the day.

Q: Well, let's talk about it because the point is this is an interesting period.

WINN: Then the Embassy was blown up a second time and I was in it this time.

Q: Let's talk about your use as an Arabic-speaking officer. Is there so much, you know, before it was French was pretty much the language you were supposed to use, wasn't it?

WINN: And also English. By the way, I had a great Arabist working for me as political officer, Steve Engelken, still in the Foreign Service. He's gone on to greater heights by now, of course. The Arabic was useful when listening to the radio broadcasts in real time. The things would break hourly, half hourly, and many of the Muslim militia men spoke no French or English, so in that sense it was incredibly useful to know Arabic. To be fair, it was so hard to get out and get that information from the streets, so Arabic was extremely useful in these radio broadcasts. Something was happening every 35 seconds.

Q: What caused the Shia, who had been sort of an unwashed mass outside, but rather passive, to all of a sudden turn into a…?

WINN: Well, I think the Iranian influence… It was all post-Khomeini and they were energized. I've forgotten the name of the radical, something Musa, who was later kidnaped, killed while visiting Libya – a household name when I was on the desk – but anyway, I think the Iranian revolution was basically an impact. Nabih Berri was the leader of the "tame" Shia community, but he was almost swept aside by these radical crazies. Then the ferocity of the Lebanese army's just random shelling of all of West Beirut radicalized people.

Q: Well, they were a lousy army or was it on purpose?

WINN: Yes it was on purpose because West Beirut at that time was entirely Muslim.

Q: The army being Christian?

WINN: Essentially Maronites, yes. It's all fading for me, but that's when you learn real fear. Of course as it turned out those buildings didn't collapse. The artillery shells would tend to punch right through it. You could hear those things whining in and then the masonry would pop through the wall, boy it was a sight – the destruction the next morning. But then, I mean, what a saga. There we were, the Beirut Airport was closed. Everyone was living in each apartment, there's 17 or 18 people in my apartment, ditto in the consular officer's.

Q: Who was the consular officer?

WINN: I wish I could remember, a woman and she retired recently. Someone mentioned her name recently.

Q: Diane Dillard?

WINN: That's it, Diane Dillard, a wonderful lady. You ought to go talk to her.

Q: Oh, I have. Diane worked for me when I was consul general in Athens.

WINN: She took the dogs and I took the cats. So, we had all these people and all these cats living with me, because Beirut Airport closed, so we all sat around there and said, "Beirut Airport will open and we'll get all the animals out of here." Well, days went by and weeks went by and we

couldn't get them out. Most of the "dependents," the term we used then – a term I hate by the way because I later became a "dependent" – had left. Many had, not all. My wife had left because she was so concerned about our two cats and we knew the helicopters wouldn't take out pets. She had gone to Paris. Thank God she was out. Many family members weren't, and they trickled out on helicopters. It was a big evacuation by helicopter. None of us knew though on February 5th the airport wouldn't open for, gee, for five or six, seven years later. We thought it would be a matter of days. Luckily my wife left so.

Q: How did you manage to live like that?

WINN: I kept my own bedroom and there were other bedrooms for the group – these were pretty big apartments. That was the heyday of Beirut. Others doubled up at Diane's sprawling apartment, thank God. As head of the consular section, she had this mansion. The DCM took in hundreds, I don't know how many, but obviously that's an exaggeration – he took in a lot. So, we had two to a room and people kind of camping. You learn to live with all these cats, which is most peoples' ideas of hell, but my wife was such an animal lover. In fact, she became a professional primatologist. So, I felt a duty to her to take in the animals, even though our cats had left.

Q: No, I've got two cats at home, so I'm a cat person. Tell me about the cats.

WINN: Well, briefly, weeks went on and, in fact, I remember that when the cats moved into my apartment, at the last moment one lady appeared, a communicator. I didn't know her name. She was holding a box, a wooden box with a handle on it and it looked like it had an orange cover over the front. Well, the cover blinked and I realized it was an enormous cat. It was so big it just filled this box. She left and I saw this enormous head, big as a lynx. We let the cat go in the apartment and we never saw it again. He would stay in the back in the laundry room but would apparently come out at night. You'd see this enormous shape at 3:00 in the morning and carcasses would disappear overnight. Weeks went by and the situation became intolerable. Many of the family members had only gone as far as Cyprus to await their pets. Well, weeks in Cyprus... You know there's a limit waiting for these pets. They began to drift off the island and return home. Some stayed there because the Marines wouldn't allow pets to get on helicopters in Beirut. Remember, the helicopters were coming in and out all the time, but they would not take on pets. Reg Bartholomew, God bless him, went all the way to CINCEUR (Commander in Chief, European Command) in Frankfurt and said, "We've got to get these pets out of here. We're going crazy!" So, incredibly enough, they agreed to Operation "Noah's Ark," where on a routine helicopter run if we had all the pets down there at the pad they would take these cats and dogs. So, one night it was all set. We all got up at 3:00 in the morning to box up the cats and dogs and take them down to the helicopter landing pad. That big orange cat, damn him, we cornered him in a room and he began spitting and fighting and clawing. It was like catching a lynx and we couldn't do it. So, the other animals went out on that flight, but not that monster, who continued to live back in the laundry room. I'll never forget, you could see the ears of the big dogs flattened from the helicopter rotors. That's a vivid memory. Well, I still had this wretched cat and the woman stayed in Cyprus waiting for it. She wouldn't leave without her cat. Well, months and months passed – now we're into September. Remember, we were building a new Embassy. Well, you wouldn't know, in East Beirut. We had rented a building for a new Embassy. We knew we had to leave West Beirut. It was a very difficult political thing to leave Beirut, very difficult politically. You know, we've always

been in West Beirut where most of the Muslims were. That's a separate issue, but September came up and we had to go. That was the end of the cat, we thought. Push him out of the window! But, I couldn't just abandon it, especially with the owner still waiting for it in Cyprus. Incredibly, Bartholomew got permission to take out this one cat, but this time I had the Marines with those big gloves that go up to their shoulders, above the elbow for barbed wire. I had two Marines in there to help me capture it and put him in his cage. Again we cornered the cat. Well, that cat fought and fought. They grabbed the cat and he put a tooth into an artery of one of the Marines and blood starts up against the wall with a spray of blood, so the Marine let that cat go and the other Marine drew his gun, drew his pistol. I said, "Spare that cat. I will deal with the cat." Well, the helicopter left and I still had that huge cat with blood all over the wall. So, I sent a cable to this woman: "We are now moving. I've got to leave the cat." She was still in Cyprus. They'd given her a job there to wait for the cat. I hated to do it, but I had no choice. I wasn't going to stay in West Beirut for some crazy cat! Well, damned if she didn't appear the next morning. Now how did she appear the next morning? She took an all-night boat from Cyprus to Christian East Beirut and crossed the green line. No one was crossing the green line except the occasional guarded official. Yet she walked across the green line from East to West Beirut, then took another cab and walked to the Embassy. I said, "You're never going to get that cat. How will you get it back in the box? It's amazing you're here. This is against all U.S. policy. No Americans are allowed back in Beirut!" She'd taken this all night ferry and said: "Give me ten minutes." We stayed downstairs nudging each other and laughing and damn if she didn't ten minutes later walk down. The cat had backed into his cage with its damned big head peering out at us. She took another cab back and went back to Cyprus. So, we went to East Beirut and there began another saga, because two months later the Embassy was blown up over there.

Q: Well, now were we under constraints about talking to the Shia or not?

WINN: No, no, we often talked to the Shia, trying to figure out who these people were. WE had traditionally been dealing with the old-line sort of "tame" Shia leaders in parliament. Berri was the leader there, the speaker of the house at that time. He did what he could, after all, I mean it was truly the downtrodden of the earth. I mean I'm not criticizing him, but suddenly these radical sheiks down in South Beirut became rather more interesting than Berri. Now we couldn't talk to them directly – we'd be kidnaped – but we could talk to other more radical Shia leaders, religious leaders than we hadn't before. So, we would do that and we also had some pretty scary militia fringe types around, too. I really had a time. "If this is Thursday it must be time to talk to so and so." There was endless amounts of people you could talk to in Beirut.

Q: Were you getting much from them, I mean, were we getting hit on the head for support of Israel or was it more localized?

WINN: More localized at that point. The militia leaders were taking the Israeli thing pretty much for granted and it was more localized, but so much of my time was spent trying to be sure there wouldn't be more hostages. Remember all those during my tour – missionary after missionary was snatched from West Beirut and journalists were warned by the way to leave, repeatedly warned to leave and I frankly had limited sympathy. It's the old thing, you know, "I've been here forever, they love me;" of course they didn't love them. They were all snatched. So, that was the heyday of that and we were trying to survive and reporting what people were saying to us. There was very

little we could do to be pro-active. The president at American University, Malcolm Kerr, was assassinated our days after we arrived, in February '84.

Q: Well, how about concern about your being snatched?

WINN: Well, we would go out in armored cars. We would go out with armored Surburbans with an armed bodyguard. You would have your pistol at your side; it was scary. I remember our ambassador and the economic counselor had been kidnapped and murdered a few years before. So to say, "I'm going to go talk to someone today" took, I must say… It took a bit of nerve, what's the term I'm looking for? Well, courage for lack of a better word. You'd risk your life to go talk to some guy. Because particularly when you were up in his office you were pretty much a mark and we had one bodyguard. So that is I think why Bartholomew and I got along and with my political officer, Steve Engleton, we had all risked our lives to go talk to some scumbag. So, that's in the great tradition of the Foreign Service.

Q: Was there any feeling… I mean, was Washington kind of watching?

WINN: They were worried about another blowup. They were worried about the safety of us in Lebanon. "When are you going to finish that new 'annex' in East Beirut?" It was always termed the "annex" although we knew it was the new embassy and has remained so to this day.

Q: Was there, were people making calculations of why we were there?

WINN: In those days, Lebanon was too important. We had to make a presence. We had to keep a presence there. You could question why do we have so many people here and the answer was these people we will need them once we get into that new "safe" area in East Beirut, so keep them there. No, there was never any thought of pulling out the embassy wholesale. We would have been the only embassy to leave. I mean Lebanon was just too important. We'd been there forever. So, we never left Lebanon. People don't realize that. We never left Lebanon.

Q: Was there the feeling…who was our ambassador who was killed?

WINN: Frank Malloy.

Q: Malloy. I remember hearing a story saying that Washington – maybe it was Larry Eagleburger – when he arrived saying "you know you ought to get out more and see, and you know, doing what you were doing." So, he went out more and he got kidnaped and killed.

WINN: I can remember being scared. You would leave and drive out of that compound and you would think, "why am I doing this?" The ambassador traveled with a rather more fancy entourage. He had his car. Then he had follow cars and particularly preceded by an enormous Chevy Suburban with a huge snow plow on the front that would knock cars out of the way if they wouldn't get out of the way, and reimburse the drivers later. But he was the prime target, to be fair. So, it was a dangerous time and Buckley was still a prisoner, a hostage and of course, so were these various missionaries and journalists. In fact that's what I did later from 1985 to 1989 in Paris – deal with hostages in Lebanon.

Q: Well I was wondering while you were in Beirut, I'm sticking to Beirut, were you running across all sorts of people who were coming up and saying, "I can work a deal with the hostage thing" or something? I mean there will always be entrepreneurs.

WINN: The entrepreneurs were coming in and were being funneled over to the Agency in Lebanon . I didn't get a lot of those. I mean it's just not something the Lebanese politicians would even talk about with me. They wouldn't waste their time. Now the entrepreneurs, I dealt with them daily in Paris, but not in Lebanon perhaps. Just let the Agency worry about Buckley. Later, in Paris, I was inundated with would-be "go- betweens."

Q: How did you find, was the press corps pretty well gone by that time?

WINN: Yes, the great mass of them were gone, but they had quite a few press still there. I actually remain friends with some of those press that I met then. Charles Glass, Jack Redden out of Reuters, how Chief of Pakistan Bureau, they were there. The hard core core had left. There was still quite a crowd there though. I have always enjoyed dealing with the press by the way. Im not one of those who shy away. I always thought they were amusing. I always learn a lot from them. I've only been burned twice. Once in Dakar and actually once in Beirut, neither very seriously.

Q: How did that happen?

WINN: I was dealing with a very young reporter in Dakar and I made some condescending remark about the Senegambia Confederacy (Senegal and Gambia formed a short lived or short-lived confederation). I made some condescending dismissive remark about it and I had not realized he should have known it would be off the record, but he used that. I got into a bit of trouble. In Lebanon again I referred, a woman asked me, "How do you like this job?" I said, "Its great. Its like being a herpetologist in a snake pit." That ended up in a Christian Science Monitor, but I've never been seriously burned. In fact I've really gone out on a limb. What you do is of course, get to know your interlocutor and if you don't know the guy personally, you really lay down the ground rules. Its very simple. But, I've always had good relations with journalists and found them very useful. That was my bread and butter in Paris, the Arab journalists.

Q: Dealing here in Lebanon.

WINN: My bread and butter in Lebanon, too. I knew them all.

Q: How did you find them as sources?

WINN: Well, they always had their own ax to grind, but nevertheless they knew absolutely the most excruciating detail about everything going on the ground. I never was burned by the way by an Arab journalist. They always assumed we knew more than we did. It always cracked me up. They assumed we were pulling the strings. An endless, bottomless well of information. Sure, of course, they would have these outrageous stories in their own. They each were in the pay of one country or another, come on. But still, I could still learn a lot from them and it was fun. Particularly when we had a little more freedom, not very long, in East Beirut and I could get out a little more

and they would come over there and meet me. That was before the embassy blew up and we went back to the armored Suburban.

Q: Before we move to the embassy thing.

WINN: Were still in West Beirut.

Q: What about, did you have much contact with the Israelis?

WINN: I never did lay eyes on an Israeli. I've forgotten what the ground rules were, but its funny I had no contact with them. They did have an office up there actually north of Beirut. Maybe I had an occasional phone call. I cant remember the ground rules. Maybe the ambassador dealt with them. Either there was some ground rule, I've forgotten exactly what the situation was. I just didn't deal with them.

Q: What were you getting from your interlocutors including the rest of the staff at the embassy about the Israeli presence in Lebanon?

WINN: That it was time to move on out. It was time for them to withdraw. I recall a time of negotiating the logistics of the withdrawal during my tour there gradually pull back first to the Litani River. There was a weird enclave up there north of Beirut, but it was mainly just to show the flag. But the Israelis were not a major factor oddly enough during my tour there, but Ryan was the one who had the whole thing prior to my arrival. By the time I got there I never saw, there were no Israeli troops in Beirut.

Q: I just lost my thought. Well, what about, you know you had before your time this massacre done by Christian militia in Sabra and Shatila, but what was the feeling that you were getting from people who had been around there? Was this done in collusion with the Israelis or was the militia getting out of control?

WINN: Oh, I think the Israelis looked the other way. I think we'll never know whether the Israelis knew they would commit a wholesale massacre, but they were in general agreement I think. In fact the commission determined that Sharon sort of looked the other way. Yes, there was collusion and the Maronites went in with the collusion of the Israelis. Well, Im not sure if anyone will ever know whether they, the extent of the massacre was predictable, but again things moved so quickly after I got there. Sabra and Shatila was almost like another era, another.

Q: Well, lets talk about, what you got to a new embassy?

WINN: Well, we had to, our living conditions in West Beirut were getting intolerable. After all February to September all of us jammed into these apartments.

Q: Who did the cooking by the way?

WINN: Im trying to recall. We hired a cook, although one of my good friends, Reuter's correspondent Jack Redden, recalls to this day the worst meal he ever had was in that apartment

where we just dumped everything we had into one pot. He remembers a singularly horrible meal. We would send the cook out in these armored cars and she would do the cooking. I barely recall the food. I remember there were some female officers living with us, too, and that was still in an era where we could be condescending enough toward women to sort of leave that to them. I blush to recall, but as recently as 1983 that was still the attitude. The food though, I remember the main concern was keeping a supply of booze and wine. Wed sit there, we overlooked the sea. We were right on the sea. It was very pleasant out there watching the ships go by, aircraft carriers go by and what have you. The Jeanne d'Arc aircraft carriers.

Q: Yes, that's French.

WINN: It was getting so claustrophobic in West Beirut and the other pressure was of course, once we moved to East Beirut the dependents, the families could return. So, that was the intention.

Q: Was this just I mean you know the families returning sounds like this was just not a good place to bring people back.

WINN: But, in East Beirut in those days was "safety." We'd go over to East Beirut for R&R. Wed go over there for a break. In those days, that was where it was okay. You crossed the green line, get over there into East Beirut and you know, it was lotus land. There were nice restaurants, the Christians, I mean that's where a normal life could resume.

Q: Nobody was setting off car bombs and things like that?

WINN: Very, very occasionally, but the car bombs would be down in a Christian area called Ma'almeltein, right down on the green line, but our new embassy site was so far up the coast in Awkar, that nothing had ever happened up there. It was well away from the sea. So, we chose this apartment building, a single apartment building to be the new embassy. We rented it and fenced it off, but the barriers were not yet up, but the decision was made to move, the pressure was just too much, we've got to get out of this wretched situation in West Beirut. So, we all went over there and we all looked around, I remember apartment hunting. I had this beautiful apartment. We all chose our apartments and we moved over there finally in September.

Q: September of '84?

WINN: '84. Then we all said sayonara to West Beirut, which we left there as "the Embassy" a little, tiny office in West Beirut. It reminds me of when I was in Kenya and I was driving out and I saw a tiny cinder block hut that said, "The such and such hotel under new management." Well, this was our embassy in West Beirut. We had a tiny little annex that we called "the embassy" and we had this huge building in East Beirut, which we called "the annex" for political reasons. The Embassy "annex" - East Beirut - is still our Embassy to this day. Off we went to East Beirut, we all moved into our beautiful apartments and we began. The as yet unfinished embassy, in fact the barriers had not been erected yet. They had those stanchions that the car would have to do several Us, which the bomber did very quickly, but no barriers. We had guards at each end, but we ourselves lived out on the economy just as happy as you could be. I bought a car and the families came back, back they came. Everyone flew in, they came in actually the airport was still closed,

they didn't fly in at all. They came in by helicopter from Cyprus.

Q: Now Bartholomew was still the ambassador?

WINN: Yes, he had arrived just before I did, only a month before I did.

Q: So, what happened?

WINN: As I say, we went over there to lotus land. It was funny because we could relax and we were going out to restaurants and we had our own apartments and Im driving all over in my car and one day in October it was, wed been there three weeks, maybe a month, waiting for our families to return. I was sitting in my office talking to a Dutch diplomat of all things and I stood up and looked out, (my office was in the back of the embassy) and I said, You know we don't worry about car bombs or anything here. What I worry about is someone on that ridge behind me just driving across with a 50-caliber machine gun on the back of a flatbed truck. At that point the embassy blew up. Where we were, both of us were standing, we had moved away from the window and we were standing between two windows that the blast went over the top of the building sweeping the workers off the top, killing them, and then into the back parking lot, flattening the cars in the back including mine and blowing in the back windows. It was the same thing that happened in Beirut, so I don't know how this works, but it does, there's a window on each side of us just blew in and across the room the frames hit and knocked us on the floor and I realized the building hadn't collapsed and we weren't hurt. So, the thing to do then was to go in and see what on earth had happened. It was clear it was a car bomb. Do you want a description of this?

Q: Sure.

WINN: Well, I don't know, you could barely see because of the dust. Its so funny in the movies when these things blow up, they cannot recreate the fact that you can barely see from all the dust in the air. It doesn't do justice to the fact that you can barely see your hand in front of you. All the plaster dust, we went and sort of staggered into the front office and these flames and smoke billowing up outside the window, but there was the British ambassador who had been visiting Ambassador Bartholomew. He was standing in the middle of the room covered in blood which turned out to be mainly scalp wounds and a broken wrist pointing at a pile of rubble saying, Your ambassador is under there. For some reason Bartholomew had been seated, he had been seated on a couch, Don't know why and the wall behind him had physically caved in on him. He was buried. You couldn't even see him, so we started digging away at the rubble. The rubble like that cat, blinked and I remember seeing it was Bartholomew he was still under there still in a seated position. He blinked through the gray dust and we pulled him out. In the meantime, one of the Americans, the RSO, had blood spouting, assistant RSO, out of his arm. He'd cut an artery and he had this plume of blood and so somebody had to take care of him. The other RSO by the way had taken a blast in the face out in front. He wasn't killed, but his face was rearranged, but he is still in the Foreign Service, to his credit. Al Bigler. Years of plastic surgery. So, we got Bartholomew on his feet. Still he was totally dazed. He doesn't remember any of this and he was able to go down the steps bloody glass strewn steps. We were on the sixth floor with people supporting him. It was not like he was carried out, but he was able to emerge more or less on his feet and off to the hospital where he had suffered a lot of small lacerations, but was otherwise okay. He has a little scar here

(on his face) to this day. So, then it was time to get out of there before the building collapsed. You know, we remembered Beirut and it was time to move on out of there. So, people were going out on foot and various, 19 people were killed after all, but those who weren't or weren't badly injured. Many people again with their clothes blown off. Again in movies they can do more of this what the real things look like. The clothes were blown off or you know the shirts blown off or something. Somehow that never comes through in explosions in the movies. Everyone is still fully clothed in the movies. But anyway, these things that strike you at the time and but for some reason I hung around on the sixth floor for a last look up there. I didn't think the building was going to collapse by then. After all an hour had passed and I heard a moan and under a pile of wood I found the DCM's secretary where she had been sitting in the front and luckily not by a window or she surely would have been killed. She had had her arm shattered and the bones of her arm and her hand. I remember it looked like a meal of frogs legs after you've had the frog legs. These little bones in her hand. She was lying under there. I thought what do I do now? She was able to walk though. I said, Im not going to be a hero and carry her and slip on this. I had a piece of wood and I made a primitive splint and used my tie so if she bumped her arm it would minimize the pain. She was small. I thought about [how] I could be Rambo and carry her, but if I slip on this glass and its very slippery, the blood... So I again supported her as we walked out. I later got a cable from her, Thanks to David Winn for carrying me out of the embassy. I thought, gee, I could go out to dinner on this, but I did not carry a woman out of the embassy. I supported her and I've often wondered how she is doing today. I cant even remember her name.

Then the British ambassador, one of his staff was still there, so I got in his car, the roof of which had been flattened. So, we drove to the British embassy looking through what looked like out of a tank turret. There was about two inches there where we could hunker down. I sent a cable to by that time everyone had been evacuated to Washington telling them what had happened. Then I came back to find the press milling with the DCM in West Beirut. I found myself in charge. So, I then faced the press and gave an account of what had happened and didn't take the bait, you know. Do you blame the ambassador, do you blame the State Department security for all this? I would not take the bait on all this. I said, No, no one could have foreseen this. Anyway that was replayed repeatedly in the States and the press was calling my aged mother in Dallas and by that time finally the DCM was able to make his way back and resumed charge.

Q: Who was the DCM?

WINN: Lyne, Steve L-Y-N-E. You might want to interview him. Steven Lyne, long since retired, wonderful guy. He'd barely arrived, poor guy, but stayed long after I left. Id like to give him my regards. Then we formed our own enclave - East Beirut. We're psychologically back to West Beirut, another enclave. Marines, the whole thing. We only had 19 killed as opposed to 63 in West Beirut because the building didn't collapse. By the way, you know the driver of the car was shot and killed in front of the embassy. He was aiming for the underground parking garage in which case the whole thing would have pancaked, but it didn't. They got him, some say our guards got him, some say the British guards got him. Guards at either end were killed by fire at each end shooting at the other. So, that's the end of that story. I remember the Lebanese army put APCs and guards around individual houses and then out went the dependents again. Out went the families virtually the next day. So, here we go a repeat of West Beirut, that was a downer. We did continue to live in our individual apartments with a Lebanese APC sitting out front. That's the scaredest I

ever was because I thought if someone really wants to kill me, they can come in the back door and kill me.

Q: They know where you are.

WINN: Yes, I was still in my free standing house. You see, the bad guys know where we were living, and we had only a Lebanese guard out front falling asleep. So, I got a pistol and I began sleeping in the guestroom. I would put blankets under the other bed to make it look like I was in my bedroom. I thought, God is this any way to live? But we did. We got used to it and I carried this pistol around of all crazy things. I would have killed myself if I had to use it. We still continued for a while to drive our own cars to work. I remember I had my car with the roof flattened from the bombing and I had it repaired and would continue to drive to work. But that didn't last long. Then the armored Suburbans would pick us up. That took forever to get to work, forever. We had to vary the route and it was pretty horrible.

Q: Was activity picking up where you were? Was that explosion unique or was the war being...

WINN: Well, I take your point, I take your point, I think we had a few more car bombs that were farther afield in East Beirut. We really began to realize that it was just as dangerous there. You could even make the case, you had some Christian militias there mad at us, although, but we were mainly, we were mainly afraid of being kidnapped in East Beirut, murdered and kidnapped in East Beirut, which was formerly regarded as safe. The ambassador continued to live in his residence, which was far out of town. The residence was south of Beirut up in the mountains. It took him an hour and a half each way. His convoy was pretty horrible. He was looking for a new residence up there when all this happened and that didn't change.

Q: Who was responsible for the car bombing?

WINN: Well, I'm embarrassed to say we never have been quite sure to this day. We've never really sorted that one out. You know, a vague attribution to the Iranians, and to various crazy factions in the south. I don't think they've ever reached a conclusion. I'm appalled to say that's the case also with regard to West Beirut. There's Imad Maghnia who's still at large out of south Beirut often fingered as the guy who actually organized the bomb. Its amazing how little time goes into sorting out who did it when you're trying to survive, and then I kind of walked away from the bombing. Of course, Paris from '85 to '89 was just a constant obsession with Beirut

Q: Still now while you were in Beirut, were you keeping up your contacts?

WINN: Yes, we would, but to get back into West Beirut was a major foray. Cross the green line and that was hair-raising enough. It was all well and good to be in your Chevy Suburban going across the green line, but you were still going into enemy territory.

Q: Well, I mean how enemy was it, I mean?

WINN: Well, at that time the hostages were still captive, and we were all targets. It was a scary thing to go into West Beirut because anyone seeing you cross that green line into West Beirut

knew you had to go back across the green line to East Beirut. They could wait for you there. There was an eerie no mans land in between. No one was ever snatched from the Embassy, however. It was dangerous enough that we just gave up on the annex, Ill say that.

Q: Well, I mean I'm just wondering.

WINN: I mean we gave up keeping open an embassy in West Beirut.

Q: Were you finding, as sort of a professional, were you finding.

WINN: Well, if I could interrupt. More and more of our reporting came over the phone, phone conversations and the press in West Beirut.

Q: Because I was just wondering whether you know the calculation came, all right, I'll go talk to these guys. I'm getting almost, I wouldn't imagine you would be getting particularly different stories.

WINN: No, no. It was showing the flag and showing that we as Foreign Service officers could still get out. But, not one single conversation was ever worth risking your life for. However, we did.

Q: Im just, just looking at this sort of professionally, you know you play this game, you're showing the flag, who gives a damn?

WINN: No one did and finally we began to cut back on it.

Q: You know, its so easy to get into this, well, we don't want to let our side down, but nobody else is playing that game. I mean, they.

WINN: Well, to his credit, Ambassador Bartholomew I think gradually saw that this is ridiculous. In fact it got to the point that often, he wouldn't take a note taker with him when he went out. He said, This is a risk for one person, but not two. That sort of thing. But often I would insist on going with him, you know, don't let the side down. I had a bizarre episode once when we got to East Beirut, I was invited to spend the night up in the mountains at a hotel, a Christian hotel by the owner of the hotel. While I was up there in the evening sitting in the bar with the owner, one of the more radical Christian militias who had a vendetta against this guy came into the hotel and shot his brother dead practically in front of us. I mean they just snatched the guy from the table and took him off and executed him. We were sitting there having dinner and these Christian militia thugs came in. But they were a little discombobulated to see someone from the U.S. Embassy there and my host had always known these guys were out to get him and he disappeared knowing; he didn't desert me, he was running for his life. He had a hiding place in that hotel and there I was. I never feared for my life never remotely because these Christians are not insane. You know, its not like Osama, that's the last thing they want to do - kill an American diplomat. They pulled back when they saw someone from the embassy there and formed a cordon around the hotel as a standoff the rest of the night because they wanted this guy to emerge. They wanted him, but I just stayed there all night knowing they weren't going to harm me, but knowing they would come in and snatch him having executed his brother if I wasn't there, and the next morning I called Ambassador

Bartholomew and I said, You know, we had an interesting night up here. Can you call the president of Lebanon, Amin Gemayel and through his contacts tell these guys to go home? Which he did and this hotel owner whose name escapes me, although he's now the director of tourism for Lebanon, I saw his name recently in the *New York Times* and he was understandably grateful. I dare say I saved his life. I think had they come in they would have found him. But I only passively saved his life just because I happened to be there and stayed there. Its like the movie Peter Sellers move, Being There, but I did nothing active.

Q: Being There, yes.

WINN: To go over to West Beirut was another kettle of fish.

Q: How about people from Washington coming?

WINN: Donald Rumsfeld came. In fact Rumsfeld visited in February because in those days he was the special negotiator for Lebanon and he was visiting Lebanon. We were up at the Residence, this was two or three weeks after I had arrived, and I remember Ambassador Bartholomew and I were standing there at the residence, which overlooks Beirut and South Beirut. We were looking down after the Lebanese army had shelled it at this smoking city when, there was always this crackle of small arms fire when the ground maybe 50 yards below us began leaping up. We realized someone was raking the residence with 50-caliber machine gun fire below us. We beat a quick retreat and then for some reason there were a lot of shells falling around the residence and I remember myself, Mrs. Bartholomew, Don Rumsfeld and all of us hunkering down in the kitchen pantry. The shells came in around but none hit the residence. In 1984 the marines were leaving, "redeployed offshore." We left Beirut with our tails between our legs, but there weren't many emissaries or visitors.

Q: Well, you know, there was this question of what the hell the marines were doing there, even before the barracks were blown up.

WINN: I remember when I last heard the marines were going into Lebanon. I was vacationing in the south of France in 1982 and I turned on the radio and the BBC said the U.S. marines had gone into Beirut. I said, this is a Monty Python parody, this cant be. Why would we send U.S. marines into Beirut? I remember telling my wife, sitting there in the south of France. It was incredible that we ever got involved.

Q: Well, while they were there were we raising questions about you know, lets get them out of here?

WINN: Phil Habib had said put them in there, and in they went. To just "save Lebanon," and then it became quickly clear that we were sort of by default siding with the Christians in a civil war. It didn't take long before we realized we were just sitting ducks.

Q: But actually they were there for some time.

WINN: That's right. Im trying to recall. They would have gone in in the summer of 1983. It was

after the marine barracks blowing and that was the motivating force for taking the marines in and then I can remember Bartholomew so they would have pulled out in early 84, mid 84 because they still hung in in West Beirut after the embassy left.

Q: Redeployed.

WINN: "Redeployed offshore" Bartholomew had to say this with a straight face, which is what ambassadors are paid to do. You might want to if you're ever in Rome, interview him. He loves to talk about Beirut, as I do. I have pleasant memories of working with the guy.

Q: I'd love to if I could.

WINN: Yes. He goes on Italian TV to talk about Beirut sometimes. Then it really got pretty grim after that. I had to leave because of my wife's health. They rewarded me with the NEA watcher in Paris. Its so funny. I could have used a reward for the tedium of Dakar. I didn't feel like I needed a reward for Beirut, it was always so exciting, but that's the way the Foreign Service works.

PARKER W. BORG
Office of Counter Terrorism
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Ambassador Borg was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College and Cornell University. In 1965, after a tour with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. .During his career he served in Vietnam and Zaire, and in the State Department in senior positions concerning Vietnam , West Africa and Counter Terrorism. He served as US Ambassador to Mali (1981-1984) and to Iceland from 1993 to 1996. Ambassador Borg was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in2002.

Q: In a way, I can see you had two customers, clients, or people you went after. One would be the intelligence people within the United States, the CIA, the FBI, INR and the military, to feed you information, but the other one would be foreign governments, particularly the police powers or their investigative powers. Let's talk about the overseas operation first. What were you doing?

BORG: Overseas we were, for the first year or so, responding to terrorist incidents as they occurred and participating on almost a weekly basis in task forces back in Washington where we were attempting to resolve these crises. There were the individual crises, individual terrorist incidents, the various hijackings that took place; and the second type of crisis was the continuing presence of hostages in Lebanon, and an organization known as Hezbollah kept taking Americans in Beirut and holding them hostage. This was an issue that was there when we started in the office and was there when I left the office. It was a continuing high-profile and very difficult issue that we spent an awful lot of time on. This goes back to your original question of how were embassies

organized. I'm trying to think if we had a counterterrorism coordinator. I don't think so, because if there was an incident, then the ambassador and the DCM and everybody became involved, and when there wasn't an incident, we were focused somewhere else. So it wasn't the sort of thing where there was a continuing problem. The bureaucratics in Washington were far more complicated. We first had to sort out our relationship with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) and between ourselves and the different regional bureaus as to who took the lead when something occurred outside the United States. The third level was the relationship with the CIA and military. I think that it came to a draw within the Department, because we were quite successful at dealing with the CIA and the military and the FBI in bringing everything under a common umbrella over the course of the time that we were working in the office. Once it was established that we were separate from DS, we went to Ambassador Spiers' daily meetings where we talked about security, but there was rarely a question again of what was our issue and what was their issue. Essentially that was resolved. When there was a hijacking or something of that nature and a task force was established, there was always the issue of were we in charge of it or was the regional bureau going to be in charge. The way it worked out, for the most part, was that, since the Middle Eastern Bureau had so much experience and so many people who had worked these issues, we had sort of a co-equal relationship with them when there was an incident, but when it was one of the other regions in the Department, we had the expertise and the region didn't, so they deferred to us.

Q: Let's take the Middle East. In a way, the whole time you were there, there were people like Terry Anderson sitting in a closet somewhere in Beirut. I would think, one, there would be a standing committee almost dealing with this.

BORG: There was.

Q: What were you doing?

BORG: This will be a story that will weave its way through all of our discussions. I believe it was in maybe November of 1984 when I went over to one of the first meetings at the White House in the Situation Room chaired by a lieutenant colonel by the name of Oliver North, who informed us - I think Bob Oakley had been to the meeting the previous week, but I was at the one that week - that the President wanted to make sure that the hostages were all released by Christmas, and he wanted us to come back in a week and report what were going to be our initiatives to see that the hostages in Lebanon were all going to be released by Christmas. We scurried about, we tried this and we tried that, we contacted embassies, we met intermediaries, talked with different people about what might be done, and came back and said, "Well, here are the things that we're doing." But Christmas came and passed, and the hostages had not been released. At the next meeting, the first week of 1985, Oliver North said, "The President wants the hostages released by the inauguration." This would have been four years after the Iran hostages had been released, and "the President doesn't want publicity that there are hostages at this time."

Q: So we're talking about January 20th.

BORG: Yes, '85, because it had been '81 when the Iranian hostages were released. So once again we go back and we scurry and we talk with people. Jesse Jackson was one of the people who thought he could get the hostages released. Various distinguished and not so distinguished people

in the Middle East all had their gimmick, their reason why they thought something could be done, and we talked with every single one of these people and said, "What can you do?" We would give them facilitation, embassy assistance, when they went out to the region to talk with people and to go into Beirut and see what they could do. But again nothing happened. So these meetings continued over the course of the next year or year and a half, always with some new deadline and some threats that we needed to get rid of this problem, we needed to end this really serious threat to people in Lebanon. The participants at the meeting were ourselves, the CIA, someone from the Joint Chiefs office, somebody from the FBI, and they brought in occasionally people from DEA because DEA had contacts through drug connections in different parts of the world, but the Middle East Bureau generally was not a participant because Ollie didn't trust the people in NEA. So we attended the meetings and we made sure that NEA was informed what was happening and so forth. This was the counterterrorism working group; I'm sure it had some initials, which I've forgotten.

Q: Were there any promising leads? I'm sure everybody's mind was cranked up, but what seemed to be the essential that was keeping them from being released?

BORG: The essential issue that seemed to keep them from being released was that there had been an attack against the American embassy in Kuwait and the Kuwaiti government had caught the attackers and several of them were members of an organization called Hezbollah from Lebanon. The kidnappers let it be known that if certain Hezbollah people in Kuwait were released, then they were prepared to release the Americans. That was one story. On the other hand, there were radicals within Lebanon who were trying to force Americans out of the Middle East, and so by making life threatening in Lebanon they thought that the Americans would all leave. So they focused on journalists, they focused on people at the American University in Beirut, they focused on missionaries, because there weren't many Americans left and those who were there at the time were largely sympathetic to the Arab cause, but they were under continuing threat and there was always danger that somebody else was going to be picked up. I think the CIA station chief was one of the people that they had seized at this time, so we had a sometime differing approach from that of the CIA that seemed far more interested in convincing the Kuwaitis to make some kind of accommodation than we did at the State Department. We were much firmer in that we don't negotiate with terrorists; and just because some American official is seized, we should not give in to the demands because that just puts more American officials at risk of being seized by other groups who want something else.

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Q: Let's turn to the Middle East.

BORG: The terrorist groups in the Middle East that were of greatest concern to us were the radical Palestinians and the various groups associated with Lebanon, many of which operated with the collusion of the Iranian government. The Syrians had their candidate, Abu Nidal, a man who just passed away but had been very active, and he was in Syria. It was essentially these groups. What really emerged in the time that we were working these issues was the concept of state support, that certain groups were getting support from governments to conduct terrorist activities against their country targets, and this would have been the Hezbollah with Iranian support operating out of Lebanon, operating against the Americans in Beirut, and operating against Israel; Abu Nidal

supported by the Syrians; various Libyan operatives operating as an intelligence agency within Europe. These were considered the most threatening groups. They were the ones that were taking the hostages in Lebanon, and they were the ones that were hijacking the aircraft. The European terrorists, by contrast, did the occasional bombing within a particular country in Europe, sometimes directed against Americans, but they were not targeting Americans in Europe or Americans who were traveling in the Middle East. So we put our primary emphasis on these groups.

Q: If you want to talk about some of the incidents, you know, the Achille Lauro thing comes to mind. Could you describe how it was...?

BORG: There was one that was earlier that was a very big one, and that was the TWA 847 hijacking which, I think, occurred in the early summer, and Achille Lauro was late summer of '85. We had our response teams organized by then. On June 14th, 1985, Lebanese Shiite gunman hijacked TWA Flight 847 en route from Athens to Rome, and they forced it to land in Beirut after two round-trips from Beirut to Algiers. So the plane took off and landed twice in Algiers and twice in Beirut before it finally ended up back in Beirut. That whole incident took 17 days. They did kill one American, a U.S. Navy diver by the name of Robert Stethem. We had our response team visiting in Algiers trying to convince the Algerian government that we could be of some sort of assistance. They declined our suggestions. There were some Defense Department people at the time who thought that we would insert a Defense Department team of divers who would hang out, pretending they were tourists, outside the Beirut airport, which is on the water, and they would be scuba diving off Beirut airport. We said, "No, that is just too much nonsense. There's no way that we can do anything like that. We can't have a program like that." These were the first incidents that I recall when we got most of our information from CNN, because CNN was on the scene in each one of these places and we were not relying on reporting from the embassies or occasional broadcasts from the main networks, but CNN was on the spot. I believe that this established a precedent for all future terrorist activities or all international incidents, that some way CNN became the big player in terms of keeping us informed of what was happening.

Q: It also kept the hijackers informed too, which meant that you had to work around the cameras or something.

BORG: That's right. We were constantly on the phone with people in the different embassies trying to sort out solutions to this, but it's hard to say that we did much that resolved it. I may find something in my notes to add subsequently, but I can't think of anything offhand.

Q: How did it end up?

BORG: It lasted for 17 days, so that would have been the first part of July. The plane landed in Beirut. I remember now that one of the reasons I don't remember the details of what happened in the end was that it was at this time that the Vice President went off to Europe to meet with European leaders about other issues, and I was detached to go along with the Vice President, Vice President Bush, to be his advisor on counterterrorism, which took the last week of the hijacking. So we were talking with European governments about it, and I wasn't on the ground seeing what was happening.

Q: By the way, along as you mention it, was there any talk about terrorism, counterterrorism, when Bush went to talk to the Europeans?

BORG: Oh, yes. That was not the purpose of his visit, but that became one of the main topics for discussion, and he discussed what was going on in every single one of the countries. He was quite well apprised about terrorism issues, because earlier in the year the Vice President was the chair of the Vice President's task force on combating terrorism which issued a report in February of 1986 that said, "Here's what the situation is, and here are the things that we're going to do." Oh, I'm sorry. My dates are wrong here. It was after these incidents that the Vice President was asked to chair a counterterrorism task force and put all of these suggestions together.

Q: When you went with the Vice President, were you getting remarks, getting a feel, about did he feel he was getting anywhere or was frustrated by the European leaders he was meeting?

BORG: No, he was not. He was engaged at a different level. What he would find at his level is everybody nodding: "Yes, this is a very important problem. Yes, we'll take this into consideration. Yes, we'll do this and we'll do that." The purpose of his trip had not been to secure any particular objective on terrorism. The purpose of his trip was something else, and terrorism was an additional...

Q: But it did keep it to the forefront.

BORG: That's right.

Q: With the TWA plane thing, you felt that you were trying to get advice, but you weren't playing a significant role.

BORG: Well, we had available for the embassy in Algiers a package of assistance that the Algerians could accept if they wanted to. I believe they may have accepted some of it but not all of it. It helped them keep track of what was happening, and it may have been one of those who flew the plane didn't stay in Algiers but shuttled to Beirut and then came back. But the issue of taking down the plane, they were certainly not going to do that. If I remember correctly, there was one plan that the pilot was going to declare - again, the details are a bit hazy - was going to declare he didn't have adequate fuel and was not going to be able to make it to Beirut and so was going to try to bring the plane down in Cyprus, where one could attempt to resolve the crisis in a friendly environment. The feel was that they already had a large number of hostages in Beirut and that if they added all the passengers on this plane and they began mixing the passengers on the plane with the hostages on the ground in Lebanon, we'd have a much greater disaster than we already had. Remember, this was a time when there was a lot fighting between the different elements within Lebanon. So Lebanon was considered at this time an extremely dangerous environment, and we didn't want the hostages to end up there. They did end up there. We were able to arrange the release of all of the different captives with the exception of the one that was killed, so, yes, from our perspective it ended up successfully in that there was only one casualty that we didn't add to the number of hostages that were already being held and they didn't mix.

Q: Now, the Algerians, what was our analysis? The Algerians just wanted to stay out of this?

BORG: There must have been a proposal to come in and take the hijackers away. The JSOC people wanted to do it. They didn't think there was anything wrong with that sort of thing. We wanted to solve the problem without a violent intervention.

Q: That was with the Achille Lauro.

BORG: Just to give a sense of what happened, June 14th was the TWA 847; there was on June 19th a bombing at the international terminal at Frankfurt's international airport which killed four people and left 60 injured; the Bella Rosa attack on June 19th in El Salvador; on June 20th five bombs in Kathmandu; on June 23rd a shaman bombed an Air India flight from Toronto over the North Atlantic killing 329 passengers and crew members; on June 23rd a few hours after the explosion aboard the Air India flight a bomb exploded in baggage handling at Tokyo's Narita Airport killing two Japanese workers; in Spain on July 1st a bomb exploded in the British Airways ticket office killing one passenger and injuring 27 others; the blast gutted the premises and also wrecked the TWA office directly above. All of these incidents occurred while the TWA 847 hijacking was going on. It was just an incredibly intense time of terrorist activities. There were more incidents than all of this in July, August and September, about a dozen or 15 more. On October 7th the Italian cruise ship the Achille Lauro was seized as it departed Alexandria, Egypt, for Port Said. The cruise ship was seized by a terrorist group. We were interested in trying to bring this to a quick conclusion. We dispatched our Interagency Response Team. They were out in the area talking with people about what needed to be done. There was a terrible intelligence failure in association with this in that they had the various Seal teams, the naval-activity Seal teams, ready to take over the ship in a surprise attack, but there was a terrible intelligence failure and the intelligence community was unable to find the ship in the ocean, and so there were no coordinates that they could ever give to the Navy as to where the ship was located.

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Q: Have we pretty well covered this thing? There might be something more if you think about it.

BORG: Let's go back to Oliver North. We talked a couple times about his activities and how we worked with him and how we were trying to get the hostages released in Lebanon. Sometime in the late summer - there were so many things happening all the time - a British representative of the Anglican Church by the name of Terry Waite came to Washington. Terry had played a role in getting some English citizens released from Libya and offered his services to try and get the hostages released in Lebanon. We heard him out at the State Department and they heard him out at the National Security Council, and I think he had a number of other meetings around town. He was in our minds just one of many people who were offering their services. Our basic policy was we'll provide facilitating support with our embassies for anybody who thinks they might have a connection or a way of doing this, so everybody encouraged him. We didn't really know what might be happening or when it might be happening, but I got a call one day from Ollie saying - this was in November of '85 - "Terry Waite is going to go to Lebanon the day after tomorrow, and I want to go brief him before he leaves. Do you want to come along?" to which I responded, "Why don't we have the embassy in London talk with him. We can send them the information, whatever

it is," and he said, "No, it's much too sensitive. I need to go myself." So I talked with Bob and he agreed and said, "Well, I think that we should go along with Ollie on this and find out just exactly what's up." So we scramble about and we catch a flight to London. We arrive not quite on time, but by the time we get out of our own aircraft Terry Waite has already boarded the Middle East Airways flight that he was going to take to Lebanon. So Oliver goes up to the Middle East Airways gate and says, "We've got to stop that plane," and the woman said, "Excuse me." He said, "There's a passenger on there that's of critical national security importance, and we need to talk to him. You've got to bring the plane back." Again, he had chutzpah, and he talked the gate person into bringing the plane back and taking Terry Waite off the plane. They escorted Oliver and me down this ramp to the place where there was a car waiting for us, and the car picked up Terry, and we met in the bowels of Heathrow Airport to talk for 15 minutes with Terry Waite. I still didn't have a clue why we had to do this in person. It turned out that Oliver, after giving his briefing of everything that you would have already thought that anybody apprised of the situation would have known and certainly could have been delivered by the embassy very easily, he pulled out a picture and he said, "This is the man who we think is behind it all. If you see him, this is the man to watch out for." I looked at the picture, and it was about passport size, a little hazy, and it just looked like this person with a beard that looked like everybody else. I thought, oh my God, we've come all the way over here to show this picture. We showed him the picture. He got on the plane and left, and we then caught the same plane that we'd come in on, we caught the round trip, to go back to Washington. So we were back within 24 hours of having departed. It wasn't more than a week later, I guess, that Terry Waite was coming out. He finished up his mission and he was coming out. He had witnessed a degree of fighting and had made some contacts and so forth, but I don't remember if he'd seen anybody.

Ollie called and said, "We're going back. We want to debrief Terry Waite about what he's learned." So I get on the plane again and we go back, and this time we do have a debriefing session with him in which he gives us basic information about what it was that he had seen and how he was blindfolded most of the time and couldn't really see who these captors were, but also his views on prospects and so forth. And so we go back to Washington with our reports. Terry Waite maybe a week or two weeks later decides to come to the United States, and Ollie has set up meetings with people here for him to offer his debriefings. Of course, being sort of naive, I couldn't figure out why, if we've got this information, Terry Waite needs to come back and say the same thing. I never have the big picture that some people do. So Ollie and I went up to New York and met him and participated in his debriefing of the archbishop from New York, the Episcopal archbishop of New York. I went into the room and I couldn't believe what a transformed figure Ollie North was when he was dealing with people in clerical gowns. It was as though he was an altar boy, and the language that he used, the deference that he used, he spoke as though he were a man of the church of himself. He was, he did go to church regularly, but he wasn't a Marine officer, he was an altar boy at these sessions. It was really interesting because there were a lot of high-level Episcopalians there.

Then Terry came down to Washington and met with the Vice President, may have met with the President, and talked about what he was doing and he might do in the future. Terry Waite then went out again, I think, in January '86, and he was this time captured and was one of the hostages himself for the next two years or so. But Terry Waite was a very idealistic individual who was quite convinced that he would be able to do something to be of assistance. We, I believe, misled

him into thinking he could do much more than we really believed was possible, because from the State Department perspective we could not see that anything was likely to come from these meetings because these people had specific demands, but they still seemed to want the release of these people who were in jail in Kuwait who'd been sentenced to death, and no amount of goodness was probably going to bring that about. Some political pressure on Iran might help but not this. This was the Terry Waite side, but there's another side of the story. The other side of the story is probably more significant, because on the various flights over and back Ollie started talking about some of the other things that he was doing and how he had found this base in Portugal where there were flights that went to Iran, and he said, "And at this same place is where there are flights that provide support down in Nicaragua." He said that he had figured out that maybe a way to get at the Iranians was to offer them some weapons.

Q: The war with Iraq was going on at this time.

BORG: No, the war with Iraq had ended.

Q: No, the war with Iraq didn't end until 1989, because it was '90, just after the war, that...

BORG: No, no, the war with Iraq hadn't begun. The Iran-Iraq war had not begun when we were doing this. The Iran-Iraq war began in maybe '87 or '88.

Q: It was a long war, about seven years, I thought.

BORG: I'll have to check this out. But Iran was interested in American equipment, spare parts for the planes that they had, and if we could provide these things, then perhaps they'd be helpful in getting the Hezbollah to release the hostages, and he thought they'd be willing to pay for this as well. What he didn't tell me was what he was going to do with the money that they were paying. He explained this story of how they were going to provide the Iranians with some of the military equipment that they needed. I went back and, after briefing Bob about this, I went and talked with the people in the Executive Secretariat, Ken Quinn specifically, and told him, "Here's what the National Security Council is doing right now on Iran." I told Ollie also that I really didn't think this was the best way to go about this because there was a ban on selling weapons to Iran and that we would get in trouble. Ollie made one of his statements - he made this statement more than once - "You know, at some point everybody will turn against me, but I know I'm doing what's right, so I've got to keep pursuing this. This is the right cause." I said, "I think you're going to have problems with this one." Anyway, I explained to Ken Quinn what had happened, Ken Quinn explained it to somebody, maybe the Secretary directly, and there was a meeting of the National Security Council in December in which the issue of arms to Iran came up, and there was a confrontation between Shultz and Weinberger with Shultz arguing very strongly that we should not be doing this. Again, I provided sort of the specifics about how much, what the quantity was, and it wasn't just a few submachine guns; it was a lot of stuff that they were talking about sending over.

Q: TON missiles and...

BORG: Yes, all that sort of stuff. So Shultz argued against it. Oliver called me after the meeting

and said, "Well, I want to assure you that this is not going ahead. The National Security Council decided that they're not going to provide arms to the Iranians, and we're not going to be doing this." So we then thought, well, we've prevailed. Little did we realize at the time - this didn't come out for another year or so - that they cut Shultz out of the subsequent meetings, and they went right ahead with their plans for arms for Iran with Weinberger. Shultz was not involved in the subsequent meetings. This came out in the Iran Contra discussions subsequently. Again, we knew what Ollie was doing in providing arms to Iran, but we didn't know the other side of it. We knew that he also had the account for dealing with the Contras, but we didn't know that he was using the money that he got from the Iranians to fund the Contras, so when all of the scandal broke about Oliver North, all of us in the State Department were essentially protected because Ollie hadn't shared the interconnection between his two accounts with any of us. The people in ARA - who was running it at the time? he's back again, Eliot Abrams - probably knew what he was doing with the Contras, but he didn't know where the money was coming from. I guess I can fill in details of things I might have forgotten when I get the written transcript.

Q: Okay, then we'll pick this up in 1986. Whither?

BORG: I became quite ill working in SCT. I came down with a totally undefinable disease, which was later considered chronic fatigue because there was no other name for it, and I had had to take a lot of sick leave while I was doing these terrorist accounts. I'd go off for a while. When I traveled with Ollie, I had to take a week off when I got back because my body was so weakened by the trip. I had to take another week off after the second trip. I had to take off two weeks, I think, after the Vice President's trip to Europe because there was just so much pressure and my body was just totally exhausted. So in 1986 I needed to take a break from things, and I went over to the Center for Strategic and International Studies for a year.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

FRANCIS TERRY MCNAMARA
Deputy Chief of Mission
Beirut (1985-1987)

Ambassador Francis Terry McNamara was born and raised in New York. After serving in the U.S. Navy during WW II, he attended Syracuse University and Russell Sage College before reenlisting in the Navy during the Korean War. Following the war, Ambassador McNamara studied at McGill University of Montreal and then transferred to Syracuse University. In 1956, he entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Rhodesia, the Congo, Tanzania, Vietnam, Benin, Guam, Canada, Lebanon, and Washington, DC, and ambassadorships to Gabon and Cape Verde. Ambassador McNamara was interviewed in 1993 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *Were you given any sort of marching orders when you went out to Beirut, of what you were supposed to do?*

MCNAMARA: I wasn't given any very precise ones. I saw Dick Murphy, who was, at the time, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. We'd been junior officers together in Rhodesia. Thus, I was a known quantity to him. I remember him saying, "Do you really want to go to Beirut? It's a very dangerous place. What, are you crazy? What do you want to go there for?"

I couldn't give him a very good reason, except that I was a little bored where I was, in Stanford, writing a book. And I didn't have any great prospects for an assignment that interested me. Beirut interested me. I'd never been in the Middle East. I'd been to wars before, and that didn't particularly scare me. When I volunteered, I never expected actually to be taken, in any case. But when I was, I wasn't reluctant to go.

No, he didn't give me any marching orders. He just simply told me I was going out there, and I was going to be working with Bartholomew. I don't believe anybody said anything other than that.

Q: *What was your impression of Bartholomew's reputation before you went out?*

MCNAMARA: A very tough guy. A difficult man. Very bright, but also pretty abrasive. I found that his reputation was not fully warranted. He is very bright. He doesn't suffer fools easily, that's certainly true. But if you do a good job for him, he's a very easy guy to get along with. And if you have his respect, there really is no problem. I liked him very much. There's no question as to who's in charge, with him. He's very much the boss. He may ask your opinion, but he may or may not take it, which is good and bad. But also, from the very beginning with him, he went out of his way to share everything with me. Apparently, I gained his trust and respect. Our relationship was very good. Indeed, we remain friends.

Obviously, when I got there, I didn't know very much about Beirut or about the Middle East, since I'd never served there and really had no special background. On the substantive side, in the beginning, I didn't have much to offer. However, I had been through other wars, and I was a good organizer. Quickly, Reg allowed me to run the day-to-day business of the embassy for him.

Q: *What was the situation in Lebanon in this '85 to '87 period?*

MCNAMARA: It was explosive. The Marines had been blown up. We lost some 240 Marines the year before.

Q: *There was a bomber from the fundamentalist Islamic...*

MCNAMARA: Well, I'm not sure who actually did it.

Also, our embassy had been blown up twice. Originally, the embassy was located in West Beirut. Incredibly, a man was allowed to drive a van loaded with explosives up to the front door. The explosion killed a lot of the people at the embassy. This was only maybe a year before I arrived.

They then moved the chancery to Christian East Beirut. A hill site was chosen and fortified. They rented a house on the crest of a hill, and dug trenches, placed vehicle barriers and strung razor wire.

It was like the Maginot line. Our offices were in several buildings at different levels on the slope of the hill. My office had rocket shields outside with walls of sand bags. The rock protection was important. And ill-intended person could fire rockets from a distance at our buildings. A heavy wire mesh was placed outside the building to deflect or explode a rocket coming in before it actually hit the building itself. The whole place was an armed camp. We had a guard force of five hundred Lebanese armed with machine guns, RPGs (rocket-propelled grenade launchers) and M-16s. They amounted to a light-infantry battalion. At the compound entrances, which were very heavily fortified and guarded, they had vehicles "devastators" They were steel barriers that rose from the middle of the road, with wicked teeth on their outer edge. Certainly no car could drive in. Maybe a tank could get through, but nothing aside from a tank could get through that. I think there were only two or three entrances that were open into the complex that we'd built on the side of this hill.

A few months before I arrived, a fanatic with a truck full of explosives had gotten into this area, despite all of the precautions and the defenses, and had blown up this truck just outside what we called the embassy annex in East Beirut. In fact, it was the embassy at that point. It was a good-sized office building. The upper stories were still a shambles when I got to Beirut. Bartholomew, who was in the building at the time, talking to the British ambassador, was badly wounded. It killed a few people and wounded a lot more.

Nonetheless, they were very lucky. The truck driver was trying to get down under the building into a garage. If he had succeeded, everybody in the building would have been killed. It would have been another Marine-barracks affair. Luckily guards realized that something was amiss when the truck approached the chancery at an increasing speed. The British ambassador's guards who were waiting outside the building shot at him. One story is that they were the ones who killed him. Others say that it was shots fired by our guards. I'm not certain. In any case, there were a lot of people shooting. Fortunately, he was hit before he could turn into the entrance to the underground parking area.

I came just after this. Bartholomew was back. He was mended. He was in charge again. Psychologically, at least, he didn't seem any the worse for wear. Obviously, you don't go through something like that without it having some effect on you. Reg, however, showed no signs of trauma that I could detect.

Q: *I take it you were without family.*

MCNAMARA: Yes, wives and children had been evacuated a few months earlier. East Beirut is the Christian part of Beirut, which was relatively friendly to us. We were safer there than we would have been in West Beirut. West Beirut, as you will perhaps recall, was where they were kidnaping westerners. Our station chief, Buckley, had been grabbed on the street, and other Americans, including Terry Anderson, were being held captive. We really could not have lived in West Beirut. We moved to East Beirut, where, although it was still dangerous, it was much less dangerous than in the West. Americans were clearly targeted by radical elements among the fundamentalist Shiites who were under the strong influence of Iranians.

I couldn't bring my family with me. I set as a condition for my going that my wife and kids would

be safe-havened in Paris. I could get to see them there more easily and my wife had family in Paris who could provide her with support. Bartholomew assured me that I could go to Paris every three months to see them. He also told me there was a permanent telephone link with Paris, which Phil Habib had put in when he was visiting Beirut that could be used to communicate directly with my family. We had direct dialing to numbers in Paris. This was a perfect solution for me, because a lot of my wife's family lived in Paris. She had two sisters and a brother who lived there with their families. In addition, she had a network of cousins, aunts, uncles and close friends in France. Thus, she would have plenty of support in Paris. It was far better, from our point of view, than staying in Washington or elsewhere in the U.S.

So I took them to Paris. I had orders for safe-havening in Paris. When I got there, the embassy wasn't very welcoming, nor were they especially supportive. We had to find our own place to live. One of my brothers-in-law let me borrow an old car. Each day, Nhu De and I checked le Figaro for apartments to let. Finally, we found a nice apartment in the Seventeenth Arrondissement near the Parc Monseau, after looking for two weeks.

At the same time, people assigned to the embassy were looking for apartments. The embassy, of course, was looking for apartments for them. In cases that I knew of, it took nine or ten months to find them apartments. I strongly suspect that the Frenchman in the housing office was getting kickbacks from landlords. That was a suspicion; I don't have any proof of that.

But, anyway, morale was dreadful in the embassy in Paris. People were constantly complaining about not being adequately supported. At the same time, on our own, we found a very nice apartment which, by any standards, would have been acceptable for a middle-level officer and his family. Maybe not the DCM in Paris, but certainly a middle-level officer.

Bartholomew's wife was also in Paris at this point. The embassy had let her use one of their apartments. This was done, however, at the Ambassador's insistence as a courtesy to a colleague in distress. Otherwise, I doubt that even Bartholomew would have been given anything but the most cursory support.

My predecessor's wife was sent home after the second embassy explosion. This was one of the reasons that he curtailed his assignment. He just didn't want to be there without his wife. Also, he had heart trouble. I could never understand how the Department could send someone with a weak heart to Beirut at that time. In fact, he had an oxygen bottle in the back of his car to be used in emergencies.

Q: *Well, Terry, you got your wife settled.*

MCNAMARA: I got her settled, and then I went off to Beirut.

I had to fly to Cyprus and then take a U.S. Navy helicopter from Cyprus over to the embassy in Beirut. We had a helicopter landing pad on the embassy grounds, and the Navy was flying us in and out at this point. That was our only means of arriving or departing from Beirut.

Q: *Let me ask a very obvious question. What the hell were we doing there under those conditions?*

Why were we there? A question that I and many of my compatriots in the Foreign Service used to ask was: "Why didn't we just pull out?"

MCNAMARA: Certainly, we could have pulled out, and it probably wouldn't have made a great deal of difference, except that we did still have the hostages to think of. From their point of view, if we had pulled out, there would have been a feeling of abandonment. That might not fully justify keeping an embassy open and keeping other people at risk, but, nonetheless, it was a factor.

Another was the political factor of having a presence in Lebanon. Lebanon, after all, was on the northern border of Israel. It also bordered Syria. The Syrians were in fact occupying 3/4 of the country. It was right in the middle of one of the great confrontations of our time. From a political standpoint, that was important.

Also, we had historically supported Lebanon's political independence. Had we moved out, I suppose there would have been an element of abandonment there, too. Although no one would say this, this was true of the Christians. Really, our support was, I suppose, support of the Christian presence in the Middle East, and the Christians in Lebanon particularly. Also, the long American missionary presence with the bastion in the American University of Beirut was a powerful argument for continuing an American presence.

Q: *All right, you're there in this situation. What sort of staffing did we have in the embassy, and how was it working?*

MCNAMARA: The State Department set a maximum number of Americans who could be stationed in Lebanon. I believe the number was fifty. The guard force was all Lebanese. Of the fifty Americans, a large portion were security people who supervised and led this large guard force, who also provided close security for the ambassador and for me. We had a Marine guard detachment that worked only in the chancery. So I would say at least half of the American complement was made up of security people. We also had an Army colonel, a Marine major, and an Army warrant officer in the Defense attaché's office. They were there to observe the military situation. There was also a military advisory group with the Lebanese army; some five U.S. Army people. They were not physically at the embassy, but were there to support the Lebanese army. We'd supported the Lebanese army with equipment and some tactical advice. The embassy had a CIA contingent of four or five people. The State officers included a consular officer, two State political officers, an economic officer, two administrative officers and two American secretaries.

Q: *How did you find the morale, and what were the problems? You were in charge of running the place.*

MCNAMARA: The morale was very good. As so often happens in a place like that, there was a great deal of camaraderie among Americans. Close relationships develop when people are isolated and in danger. Morale was very good, in contrast to Paris. Here, you were living in the middle of a real war, in a very threatening situation. Americans had been singled out for special hostility in Lebanon. We were all potential hostages. In Paris, one of the most comfortable and agreeable cities in the world, morale was lousy at the embassy. I can't explain why.

Q: *It's the brotherhood, the ties, this sort of thing, I think. Large embassies almost invariably have problems.*

MCNAMARA: In these circumstances, personal relationships became close. We relied on one another. We were much closer to one another. One didn't have a private life. We lived together. I had a beautiful apartment -- a whole floor of a new apartment building on the side of a mountain, with a superb view. But, I was guarded closely around the clock. An awful lot of my social life was with others at the embassy. We were thrown together at work and in our social lives. Nonetheless, I was out with Lebanese every day, too. I had a very active social life, despite the threatening security situation.

Q: *How did the embassy operate? The normal embassies, you get out, you circulate, you send in reports. I'm talking about the core of the embassy, the consular officer, the political, the economic.*

MCNAMARA: At most times, we were not restricted to the embassy compound or our homes. Only the Marines lived within the compound; we lived outside the compound. I was out virtually every night. I had a wide circle of Lebanese friends, as did everyone in the embassy. We were invited to all kinds of social functions by wealthy Lebanese. We circulated among the Lebanese. The problem, of course, was that we were circulating among the Lebanese that it was safe to circulate among. We were restricted to East Beirut, which was mainly Maronite Christian. Therefore, we were cut off from two-thirds of the people of the country. We had fleeting contact with them, the mainly Muslim population in West Beirut and elsewhere in the country. Our contacts therefore were restricted and selective by the very nature of the circumstances.

Q: *Did you find that this presented a problem of one-sidedness? I did an interview with Bob Dillon, who was saying how it was so difficult because you were sort of captured by this Christian Lebanese elite, which was really becoming, not peripheral, but less...*

MCNAMARA: Well, they weren't central, as they had been previously. The Lebanese government didn't control much at this point. The president controlled his palace, if he controlled that. The fiction of Lebanese sovereignty, however, was politically important to us as a symbol. The Syrians had seized effective control of most of the country. The Israelis controlled the south, along the border, the Syrians controlled the al-Bekaa Valley and thus they dominated about 3/4 of the country. The central government controlled very little.

They did have the army, which was the one instrument that remained to them. Although the army had split into Muslim and Christian elements, there were still connections, and the general staff still met once a week. For at least a year after I arrived, there was an element of unity within the army. The army was probably the only national institution that still existed in any kind of form, and it was an institution for moderation. In principle, it opposed the militias.

Now if you want me to, I can describe my arrival.

Q: *Yes, would you?*

MCNAMARA: Well, I came from Cyprus on a helicopter, and I landed in the embassy grounds.

Bartholomew was at the landing pad to meet me. He was accompanied by most of the Americans. The arrivals and departures of Americans were important to those stationed in Beirut. As we walked up the hillside from the pad, shells started to come in, very close, on our hillside. Somebody was shelling from West Beirut. I remember Bartholomew telling me, "Get down! Get down!" But I didn't want to lie down in the dirt, because I was wearing a new suit. So I bent down, without getting the suit dirty.

That was my welcome to Beirut, a nice shelling by field pieces and Russian Katyusha rockets. At the time, East Beirut was going through a period of intense shelling by one of the militias in West Beirut. It went on for two or three weeks after I got there.

I remember another time, just after I got there. There was a guy named Terry Lombacher, who was the AID representative. He managed a small, residual AID program focused on humanitarian assistance. He was a very colorful character. Physically enormous, he looked like Earthquake McGoon.

Q: *In the comic strip "Li'l Abner."*

MCNAMARA: Yes. He wore a beard and a moustache, and weighed some 250 to 300 pounds. He carried some fat, but was fairly fit. He had been in the Special Forces and had spent a good deal of time in Vietnam in the Army and later as a CORD's advisor. He and I had lots of mutual friends from Vietnam. He took me under one of his enormous wings when I got there. We became very close friends. He invited me for lunch to his house, just after my arrival. He lived on the top floor of an apartment building, just down the street from where I was living. After we finished a very civilized lunch, we went out on his balcony with cognac and cigars. Suddenly a barrage of rockets began to land in the valley beneath his house. You could see the rounds landing, one...two...three, walking their way up the valley towards us. I was fascinated by it. Lombacher finally said, "You know, I think we ought to go down to the basement. Those are coming towards us."

And I said, "You know, I think you're right."

So we picked up a bottle of cognac. He ordered his retainers to bring chairs, a table, candles, coffee, all of the things that we might want to sit out the barrage in comfort. We then repaired to the basement where we remained until the bombardment ended.

This experience was not at all unusual.

Q: *Well, again, so here you were. Your political and economic officers, and the consular officer, what were they doing?*

MCNAMARA: Well, the consular officer was occupied with consular problems. Lebanese all have many relatives in the U.S. There is much traffic between the two countries. Many Lebanese have dual citizenship and more hold "green cards". Babies are born, people get married. Visas must be issued. The consular load is heavy.

Q: *You were issuing visas and the whole thing?*

MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, all the normal consular work went on. Chris English, who had been my consular officer when I was ambassador in Gabon was the consular officer. We were old friends. He was doing the full range of consular work. There was no reason not to issue visas to Lebanese. We had nothing against the Lebanese. With all of their American connections, of course, there was a sizeable American community still there -- dual citizenship community. Indeed, there were almost no Americans who didn't have dual citizenship, who remained in the country. There was a nun, who was the head of Catholic Relief Services, and a few other long term residents.

The political officers carried on a regular reporting program, but their contacts were restricted mainly to people living in the Christian enclave. Occasionally, they got to speak to others.

Q: *Could you deal with any of the militias?*

MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, we could deal with some of them. For instance, Danny Chamoun was a militia leader.

Q: *He was the son of Camille Chamoun, who had been president for many years.*

MCNAMARA: The ex-president, yes. In the East, we were not dealing with the leader of the Lebanese Front, the biggest Christian militia, because it was felt that he was trying to shoot his way into power and get rid of the president. At the time, we were very protective of the president, Amin Gemayel, who had gotten the presidency after his brother was killed. I thought it was silly to draw such distinction between the thugs that controlled the militias. I also thought we over did our deference to Gemayel. But that was the policy. I can understand why we wished to preserve the legitimacy of the presidency, but to a great extent, Gemayel's presidency was fictional. By the time I got there, he had little real support left. Our support of his presidency was probably his single most important prop.

The political officers, the ambassador and I talked to a limited circle of people. I don't think we needed even the reduced complement at the embassy. We probably could have done without the two political officers, and certainly without an economic officer. But this was what had been decided after they drew down the numbers when the East Beirut embassy annex had been blown up.

Q: *What about contacts with the Syrians? You say the Syrians were in effective control.*

MCNAMARA: We had no contacts with the Syrians.

Q: *Was that policy?*

MCNAMARA: That was policy, yes. And also it was a matter of fact. They were in West Beirut, and we were in East Beirut, and at that point, we were not going over to West Beirut at all.

Q: *What was the feeling about the Syrians?*

MCNAMARA: We felt that the Syrians were, at this point, really an army of occupation, and that they were trying to manipulate the situation to their benefit. And we were opposing this.

I felt, personally, that the Syrians had never accepted the partition of greater Syria and the creation of the Lebanese State by the French after World War I. They really felt a manifest destiny, that Lebanon was part of their natural patrimony, and that Syria and Lebanon should be one country. The French, the Syrians felt, had manipulated the peace settlement after World War I to favor the Maronite Christians. A country was created that they could dominate.

To a great extent, of course, there's a lot of truth in this. However, Syria, as we know it, is also a creation of the Allies after World War I and II. Syria was really a creation of the Allied powers after World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was broken up. Syria had never been a country in modern times, so these things are obviously a point of view. However, from the Syrian point of view, they have never been reconciled to this breaking up of what they reckon as the greater Syria. Of course, this geographic concept also included parts of Jordan and Israel.

The Syrians remain unreconciled. Their reluctance to withdraw from Lebanon can only partially be explained by Israeli presence in the south. The present Lebanese government is their prisoner. For the present, Lebanon's position as a captive state suits the Syrians.

Gemayel, however was not under their control. We protected his position. The Syrians allowed this symbol of Lebanese sovereignty because they feared a reaction by the Israelis with our strong support, if they moved against the last vestige of Lebanese independence.

Q: *Did you have any contact with the Israelis, or was that beyond your ken, too?*

MCNAMARA: We had no direct contact with the Israelis. Our contact was through the embassy in Tel Aviv. I had no contact with the Israelis. I did have contact with Lebanese Jews, however, so that, by extension, I had some relationship with the Israelis. The Israelis were concerned for their safety. I tried to watch out for them. That was one of the jobs that Bartholomew gave me.

Q: *In your, obviously, limited contacts with the Christian elite, what were their feelings towards Israel and towards Syria at that time?*

MCNAMARA: They were ambivalent. Most of the Lebanese Christians were fearful of the Syrians and very worried that the Syrians would take over the rest of the country. Although they had earlier invited the Syrians into Lebanon to save them from Druze and Muslim attack, at this point, they feared and were antagonistic towards the Syrians. However, there were Christians who were pro-Syria. Former President Franjieh in the north of Lebanon, was very pro-Syrian. There were others who favored Syria, often for their own personal advantage. Support for Syria was especially strong among the small Greek Orthodox minority who viewed the Syrians as protection against the larger Maronite Christian sect that had dominated Lebanon since its formation at the end of World War II.

As far as Israel is concerned, the Israelis had supported the Christians previously -- directly, militarily. When they invaded Lebanon and came up to Beirut, that was in support, to a great

extent, of the Maronite Christians, and in collaboration with them. There was no question of that. And so there was still a good deal of residual good feeling towards the Israelis among the Maronite Christians, and the hope that the Israelis would be their protectors and not allow the Syrians to come and dominate the whole country. Of course, the Israeli presence in the south and the Israeli threat did restrain the Syrians from going too far. Israeli presence in the south also kept the Palestinians under control.

Q: *Did you have any contact with the Druze, and what was our feeling towards them?*

MCNAMARA: We had contact with Jumblatt. The ambassador went up there once or twice. After Bartholomew left and I was chargé, I visited Walid Jumblatt in his mountains. Walid Jumblatt's father, Kamal, had been killed by the Syrians in 1977, and Walid Jumblatt did not like the Syrians. He would have opposed the Syrians, but knew that this was not possible. They made it very clear to him that he too would be eliminated, if he became an impediment to their ambitions. Walid Jumblatt had personal relationships across sectarian lines. He and Danny Chamoun were close personal friends. He had saved Danny Chamoun when one of the other Christian militias went after Chamoun and wiped out his militia.

Q: *Amal?*

MCNAMARA: Amal was the more secular Shiite militia. Bartholomew often talked to him on the telephone. He was very much tied to the Syrians. Amal was. They were at daggers drawn with the PLO. The Palestinians had virtually taken over Lebanon at one point. They still held strong positions in Beirut and in the South. They were still a problem, and there was open fighting between the Palestinians and Amal. They had lots of little wars going on among these groups.

Q: *This was going on more or less the whole time you were there?*

MCNAMARA: Yes. There was fighting all while I was in Lebanon. We had hostages in the bag. A few of them got out while I was there, but basically, when one got out, they'd pick up others to replace him. So they always had ready bodies in the bag.

Q: *Before we move to the hostage problem, what was your feeling, and maybe Bartholomew's and the rest of the embassy's, about how this whole thing was going to work out and the concerns for whatever American policy was in the area?*

MCNAMARA: Well, as to how the problem of Lebanon would work out, I always felt that there was no solution in Lebanon, without a solution to the larger problem of the Israeli-Arab relationship. You couldn't solve the problem internally in Lebanon without solving that bigger problem. Every time someone got close to solving the problem between the factions -- the religious factions and political factions within Lebanon -- it seemed that somebody from outside would intervene and spoil the attempts at finding a solution. The Syrians, the Iranians, the Israelis, somebody would do something that would prevent the Lebanese from coming together.

God knows it would have been difficult enough for the Lebanese, under any circumstances, to come together, because there were blood feuds and deep religious divisions and a feeling among

Shiites that the old distribution of power was not fair to them, that their numbers had grown since the historic agreement had been made setting up Lebanon.

Q: *Fifty-fifty.*

MCNAMARA: No, it wasn't fifty-fifty. Power was mainly in the hands of the Maronite Christians and the Sunni Muslims. The president would always be a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the National Assembly would be a Shiite. Well, the speaker of the National Assembly was not nearly as powerful as the other two figures. No election had been held since the early seventies. The Shiites felt that the apportionment of deputies in the National Assembly was not fair. Their population had been growing rapidly as the proportion of Maronites and Sunnis had declined. No census had been taken in decades, but most impartial observers felt that the Shia made up over half the population. The Maronites were probably 40% or less and the Sunni were fewer. Power needed to be redistributed. That had to be solved if there were ever to be a reasonable solution to the Lebanese problem.

Q: *Well, I take it that, while you were there, it was really just almost a watching brief.*

MCNAMARA: That's all.

Q: *Let's talk about the hostage business. What was the situation and what was happening while you were there?*

MCNAMARA: Well, there were, I think, five or six hostages.

Q: *These were Americans.*

MCNAMARA: Yes, I'm only talking about the Americans. There were a few more, but basically, I was focused on the Americans. That was my greatest preoccupation while I was there, watching for any indication that we could get them out somehow or other. We sought valid go-betweens, anything that might help us get the hostages released. We did not even have a clear idea of where they were being held.

Shortly after I arrived, the Reverend Weir was released. I was deeply involved in this. In Beirut, we had no warning that this was going to take place. There was always talk of something happening, but we had no hard indications that anything was going to happen.

Bartholomew arranged a visit to the north, to see former President Franjieh, an idiosyncratic figure who was wholly committed to the Syrians. To go up there, he had to cross Syrian lines. Anyway, he went up there and left me in charge of the embassy in Beirut.

It was well understood that we could not go into West Beirut. His instructions to me on that score were clear, "No way go into West Beirut. It's too dangerous." We had many warnings that we would be in grave danger if we went into West Beirut.

After he left, I had contact with Bartholomew by radio. We had a secure radio communication.

That night, after he'd left, his secretary had a party. I remember that the Washington Post correspondent, Nora Bustani, was at the party. She'd been invited, and she'd come over to East Beirut from West Beirut, where she lived. Suddenly, a telephone call came for me. I went into another room. It was the acting Rector from the American University of Beirut. He told me that Reverend Weir had suddenly shown up on his doorstep, and could I please get him the hell out of there. He was very nervous. So I talked to him and said, "Well, can you get him to the Green Line? We can pick him up there."

And he said, "Well, I can't do anything tonight, but tomorrow I'm supposed to go to a ceremony near the Green Line. I will put him in the car and take him to the Green Line and drop him off. Please pick him up at the crossing point."

Q: *Now the Rector was an American?*

MCNAMARA: No, he was a Lebanese. The Americans at AUB were gone or being held as hostages.

As I understood it, the arrangement was that the Rector would take Weir to the Green Line and we would pick him up. That was fine; I didn't have to send Americans in and expose them in West Beirut. Weir was with him at that point. He'd been dropped off by his captors on the fringe of the campus and made his way to the Rector's house. I guess he was dropped off near the Rector's house. Anyway, this was all set. I informed Bartholomew and told him what was happening. This was all supposed to take place at eight or nine o'clock the following morning. I'd alerted all my guys that this was going to happen, and we were all set to do our part in the pick-up.

Suddenly, at about seven, seven-thirty the next morning, I got another call from the Rector. He had second thoughts. He pleaded with me, "Oh, you've got to get him out of here right away."

And I said, "But aren't you going to bring him to the Green Line?"

"No, I can't do that. I can't. It's too dangerous. I can't do it. You've got to get him out of here today. I'm leaving at eight-thirty, and you've got to have him out of my house."

And I said, "Well, I'll do my very best. We'll get him out of there somehow or other this morning."

So I called my staff together in the embassy. At this point, we had a group from the Special Forces, the real commandos...

Q: *Delta Force?*

MCNAMARA: Delta Force. I had some of them there. There was a lieutenant colonel from the Delta Force there. He was at my meeting with the CIA station chief, the Defense Attaché, the State Department security officer and one of his assistants. The political officer was also there. I asked them, "How do we do this?" None of the Special Forces or the CIA had any ideas. The State security chief suggested that, "We can go in and get him."

And I asked, "Is there any other way?"

I didn't want to take that chance, because I'd been warned that it was very dangerous for Americans to go in. And this could have been a setup, to draw Americans into an ambush. I didn't know; I wasn't sure what it was, but we had to get this guy out quickly. We couldn't leave him there, but yet I didn't want to expose more Americans than I had to.

We talked around the problem. Finally, one of the State security types, I think it was Scott McCleod, commented that, "the British go over there all the time to visit their embassy in the West. The Ambassador's security detail is made up of SAS commandos."

Q: *They are specially trained military people.*

MCNAMARA: Oh, yes, these are commandos, really very tough guys. They are at least as good as our Delta Force. They taught the Delta Force how to do what they do.

Anyway, I said, "Well, maybe that's it. Maybe we can get them to go and get him. But an American has to be with them. We can't send foreigners over to get our guy. They can provide the transport for us, and the cover, but I can't ask them to go over and pick up our guy without an American with them."

Scott McCleod immediately volunteered to go with them. He knew the Brits well, because he was on our ambassador protection detail and they were on their ambassador's protection detail, and they often worked together.

I said, "Okay. I'll call the British ambassador and ask him if he will have his guys come over, pick up Scott, take him with them, and pick Weir up and bring him back." Everyone agreed.

I called the British ambassador, and he said, "Yes, of course."

I had only just arrived in Beirut. He did not know me but there was no hesitation on his part. He said, "Of course, we will," when I explained the circumstances.

So, the Brits took Scott to the AUB campus. When they arrived Scott got out of the car with one of the Brits, and knocked on the Rector's door. Weir was in the house, with the Rector's sister, who was very nervous. Weir came out with them, got in the car. They came back over the line, and that was that. Weir was in our hands. We had him.

I couldn't tell anybody how we got him out. In fact, we couldn't even say that he got out. But I took him up to the embassy, and I talked to him for a couple of hours while we were waiting for a helicopter to take him out to the fleet, where they debriefed him and got him back to the United States. But, even to this day, I don't think anyone knows exactly how he got out, aside from ourselves.

Q: *Because you didn't want to expose the British to retaliation.*

MCNAMARA: Didn't want to expose the British, and also Weir was warned not to reveal anything about his release and so on. So we kept it all quiet. We were told to, by Washington.

Washington was ecstatic. We had extracted Weir without any problems and without any publicity. They were tickled that it was done as it was done. Bartholomew was upset that he hadn't been there, but he was also very relieved that the whole thing was well handled. Even though we had to ad hoc it at the end, we were flexible enough to do it, and we got him out without any problems. Ultimately I got a medal for Scott, albeit only a Meritorious Honor Award. He certainly deserved one. He should have gotten more than that for going in. I also wrote letters from Bartholomew to the British ambassador, thanking him, and thanking each of his bodyguards who were involved. Hopefully, they were appropriately rewarded by their own government. Perhaps the Secretary of State communicated with the foreign minister or something. I don't remember now. It may have happened.

My debriefing of Weir was interesting. He told me that he was held alone for much of the time. He didn't reveal anything then, I don't think, that hasn't come out in the newspapers since, aside from just how he was brought from West Beirut. He never told anybody, and we never told anybody. But now I don't see any reason for keeping it a secret. Hell, the hostages are all out, and it doesn't jeopardize anybody. And it would certainly be nice if the British got the recognition for helping us that they deserve.

Q: *Did you get involved with the operations of the National Security Council on the hostage thing?*

MCNAMARA: Yes, I did and I didn't. While Bartholomew was there, we got other alerts that hostages were coming out. We were alerted several times. Reggie talked to McFarlane on the radio.

Q: *Bud McFarlane was the national security advisor.*

MCNAMARA: Yes. When he had a call, Reggie would take me to the radio room with him so that I heard the whole conversation. He had McFarlane turned on so that I could hear the whole conversation. The two of us were together. Thus, I knew everything that he knew. At least, as far as I know, I did. Who can ever say. I've been ambassador, and there are some things that you don't even share with your DCM. But if you're smart, you do it as Reggie did. And so I was clued in while Reggie was there. In fact, some of the detailed communication was left to me and to Ollie North.

Q: *Ollie North.*

MCNAMARA: He and I were to handle the day-to-day stuff. Reggie talked to McFarlane; I talked to North. They expected something to come down. I think that was in November of '85. They expected some sort of a release at that point. Unfortunately, nothing happened, so we didn't get anyone else out at that time. Now I don't remember how that tied in with Irangate. But, of course, I knew nothing about anything like that, and Reggie didn't either, as far as I know.

Q: *Did either McFarlane or North come to Lebanon while you were there?*

MCNAMARA: McFarlane, no, because he lost the job, or got out of the job as national security advisor not too long after that. I don't remember exactly when it was. But North came later on, after Reggie had gone and when John Kelly was ambassador. Now, at that point, I really wasn't clued in. Kelly was keeping things to himself. He knew a lot more about this sort of thing than I was aware of. This was a year after the Weir release.

One night, a helicopter arrived with Ollie North, Terry Waite, General Secord, and another shadowy figure whose name I don't remember. I believe he worked for the CIA, or had worked for the CIA. I don't really know anything about him, but he didn't seem to play a very big role. Ollie North occupied center stage leaving me with the impression of a loud-mouthed cowboy. Lots of bravado. He seemed like a silly man to me. Secord and I had been classmates in the Naval War College. None of our classmates took him seriously; they all thought he was crazy and a lightweight. But, there he was. When they first arrived, they were closeted for a long time with Kelly alone. I was not being kept up on any of this. Then the DAO and I were called in.

Q: *Department of the Army?*

MCNAMARA: No, Defense Attaché. He was an Army colonel named Jim Ritchey. He and I were called in along with the CIA station chief. Ollie North told us that they were hoping to get two or three hostages released. Arrangements had been made, and we could expect something to happen in the very near future.

I'm still not sure what Terry Waite's role was in all this.

Q: *Terry Waite was an Anglican priest.*

MCNAMARA: No, he's an Anglican layman, who was the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

I knew Terry fairly well, because Terry had come to East Beirut and stayed in a CIA safe house for about a week, hoping to go over to West Beirut and do something to get hostages out. He was kept there clandestinely by the CIA. The station chief informed me of his presence since I was the chargé d'Affaires at the time. I visited him every night, took him food. Indeed, I remember bringing a bottle of champagne which we drank together. I was trying to keep his morale up and to make sure that he was okay. He was being guarded by people from the Lebanese army's intelligence group. They wore civilian clothes and were separate from the regular army. They had close relations with the CIA. The guy in charge of army intelligence was a Colonel Cassis. He was close to President Gemayel providing muscle for the President. I assume the CIA had arranged for their help with Waite. Anyway, the station chief and I went down and saw him regularly. As a result I got to know Terry fairly well. So when he came, of course, he and I joked together.

I remember North telling several of us (this was not in Kelly's office) that he would take revenge on family members of the people who were holding the hostages. North claimed that some of these relatives resided in London. If anything untoward happened to the hostages, North implied that he

would have these relatives killed. He seemed to consider the whole situation a game with himself as the principal player. Kill. That was my interpretation of what he said.

Q: *In other words, but it was all part of this...*

MCNAMARA: He was a cowboy. Not anybody that you would have great faith in. But, Jesus, I couldn't imagine how anybody could have any confidence in such a loud-mouthed, cowboy.

Q: *He may be your senator.*

MCNAMARA: He may be. But he was very frightening in Lebanon because he was playing with some highly explosive things. The fact that he had Secord with him made me even more nervous. I knew Secord from the Naval War College where he was considered crazy. Anyway, the impression North and his entourage gave made me very nervous. He said, "We're going to get some hostages out." He was expecting two or three, not one. Ultimately, we did get one, David Jacobsen, who had been director of the American University Hospital. I went over to West Beirut and got him.

Q: *How was Ambassador Kelly reacting to this? Did you share with him your concern about the lightweightness of these people?*

MCNAMARA: Well, I told him about Secord, whom I knew. Nonetheless, he seemed to be very impressed with what was going on. He didn't share with me all that went on with North. We did not have the same relationship that I had with Bartholomew. Kelly was much more reserved. I think part of it was that he was unsure of himself.

Q: *This was not his field, really, was it?*

MCNAMARA: No, he knew little about Lebanon or the Middle East. Moreover, he had never been in a confused combat area before. He'd been a deputy assistant secretary for Europe. He knew virtually nothing about the Middle East. He had never before had an important job overseas. I don't think he had been a DCM. He'd certainly never been an ambassador.

Q: *I guess we were having a hard time getting people to go there, for one thing.*

MCNAMARA: No, I don't think so, not as ambassador. No, they would have had trouble with some people, but there are so many people who are hungry to become ambassadors that they wouldn't have had any problem finding a good ambassador.

Kelly was well connected. His brother was in the White House, working in the NSC, a political appointee. I gather the family had some connections with Reagan or Bush. John was a bright guy, and he had done very well in the Department bureaucracy. He no doubt has lots of friends in Washington.

Anyway, he got the job. I had been there, by the time he arrived, for more than a year, and I'd been chargé d'Affaires for several months after Bartholomew left and John arrived. He relied on me for

interpretation of what was going on, and always asked my views and advice. Usually he took my advice. But he didn't confide in me an awful lot. He told me nothing of what North and his associates were up to in regard to the hostages. No doubt, he was sworn to secrecy on these delicate affairs.

Q: *This thing is insidious, anyway. You get people who come out and say, "This is very hush-hush. We're working on behalf of the President of the United States, directly." It grabs people, and it leads them into very peculiar places.*

MCNAMARA: Ollie North came from the White House proclaiming that he was the personal representative of the President. Kelly was probably under instructions not to say anything to me. I never have blamed Kelly for any of this. It's not his fault. He was a victim of the craziness that was going on in the White House. I'm sure that he'd been told not to tell anybody else, and so he didn't. What do you do when a person who you think really does represent the President tells you to keep quiet and not to tell anybody? Pretty difficult. You're put in almost an impossible situation. Do remember that it was not just me that was left out of the loop. George Shultz accused Kelly of failing to keep him informed.

Q: *How did this thing play out after you had your meeting? You were there for almost a year more. How did this all end?*

MCNAMARA: I'm not sure of the exact timing. But Kelly suddenly said that he had to go to London for a meeting, and I was to be the chargé d'Affaires. He left. On that very night, on television, I saw the Secretary of State, Shultz, get up and denounce Kelly for not keeping him informed -- of hiding information from the Secretary of State.

Q: *Kelly?*

MCNAMARA: Kelly. Well, Irangate was just coming out at this time. Shultz was testifying before the Senate. In a most dramatic way, Shultz proclaimed that he had not known of the attempts to make deals with the Iranians over hostage release. Jesus Christ. I mean, all of this stuff had suddenly come out, that we were fooling around with the Iranians, and that we were secretly negotiating for the freedom of hostages. It was like a bomb shell. Our public position had always been that we would not negotiate for the release of hostages. I had never, in my wildest dreams, thought about deals being concocted with the Iranians. Personally, I was shocked.

I remember being called by Nora Bustani of the Washington Post. She called several people at the embassy trying to get information or comment. I remember telling her, "I know nothing about any of this." She acted as if she thought this was "no comment" stuff. I was really bouleversé, as the French say. I just couldn't believe such a deception could have taken place on an issue involving such basic principle and honor. Obviously, I was very naive. I told Nora that aside from what I had seen on TV, Kelly has gone to a meeting outside Lebanon. "I really don't know anything about it. I can't tell you anything, because I don't know anything."

Q: *And then what happened?*

MCNAMARA: Then the Washington Post quoted a diplomat in Beirut as having told Nora Bustani that he knew nothing about any secret negotiations with anyone over the hostages and was as shocked by Shultz's remarks as anyone else. The next day I got a telephone call from April Glaspie who was the country director for Lebanon. I didn't have an awful lot of admiration for April. April is a person who has encyclopedic knowledge of things Arab. She acts as though she had a monopoly of knowledge on all things involving the Middle East. In short, she is a very arrogant lady, and a pain in the ass.

An awful lot of business there was transacted on the telephone, which I always thought was very dangerous. One, it leads to misunderstandings. Two, there is no written record of what went on, and that is dangerous, two, for all parties, especially those who were exposed. But the possibility of misunderstanding is what worried me most. And I just didn't like using the telephone to discuss complex, important matters. A secure line, okay, but the question of passing instructions and so on by telephone I think is a very bad idea.

Anyway, April was always on the telephone. So she called me and she said, "Did you read what Bustani wrote?" And I, of course, hadn't read it. I didn't know anything about it. She said, "Did you say anything like that?"

And I said, "No. I talked to Nora Bustani, and I told her I knew nothing of any attempts to exchange arms for hostages, which I didn't."

She then demanded, "Well who did `undercut' Ambassador Kelly in speaking to a journalist?"

I replied, "I really don't know."

She said, "Well, you must interrogate everybody in the embassy and find out who spoke so disloyally to Nora."

And I said, "No, I won't interrogate people. I'm sorry."

What the hell was I going to do? If somebody expressed shock and dismay to Nora Bustani, what was I going to do, hang them up by their thumbs? I admittedly spoke to Nora. Possibly some of it came from me, but some of it certainly did not. I know she talked to one or two other people. But, goddamn it, under those circumstances what could be expected. This was hardly a case of disloyalty.

April insisted that someone was "disloyal." With a nasty edge to her voice, she ordered me to find out who had been "disloyal to their Ambassador."

Jesus Christ, who was disloyal to whom? Were we disloyal to somebody, or was somebody disloyal to us? We were the guys who were sitting out there in harms way being told time over time that there would be no negotiations for hostages. All the time, freewheelers were carrying on negotiations with Iranians. Here, we see our Secretary of State on TV accusing our Ambassador of duplicity and we are not supposed to be surprised.

April often would go off like a rocket, an unguided rocket. She was very emotional and unpredictable. She had encyclopedic knowledge of all things Arab, but she had very poor judgment. I think she also felt that no one in Beirut was qualified to be there. None of the top management at the embassy were Arabists -- Bartholomew, Kelly, me.

Q: *Well, from a practical point of view, Lebanon was not really an Arabist post, was it? Looking at it objectively, I can't think of any other place in that so-called Arab world where the Arab currents were so atypical in nature, so that having an encyclopedic knowledge of how the Arab mind worked elsewhere really probably didn't play a hell of a lot of role there.*

MCNAMARA: Well, probably less than in most other Arab countries, but it's still an Arab country. Also, knowledge of the history and of individuals is important. But it's not as important as April would have liked it to be. Being an Arabist, she felt that an Arabist should be in that job (she felt she should be in that job; not just an Arabist, but she), and that other people just weren't qualified. If you didn't have a 4.4 in Arabic, you just weren't qualified to hold these jobs.

Anyway, I had my problems with April, as did many others.

Q: *Did you get any further repercussions, or was that pretty much it?*

MCNAMARA: Well, she kept after me for a few days but finally gave up when she realized that I would not interrogate members of the embassy. When Kelly returned, he never mentioned the Bustani piece. I am sure that he had better sense than to make an issue of such a delicate question. Imagine how the press would have treated any attempt by the embassy or Department hierarchy to punish embassy personnel under such circumstances.

Q: *Well, there was nothing particularly to say, outside of being shocked and not knowing.*

MCNAMARA: That's about it. I don't remember exactly what the quotes were, but they probably reflected what most of us were feeling. I'm not sure where they all came from, and I don't really care. We were shocked. We were surprised and shocked. We were feeling, Here's the Secretary of State getting up denouncing our ambassador. We were wondering, What the Christ is going on? What is this? What kind of games were played behind our backs? Were we deceived or what?

Q: When this news came out, it wasn't a full revelation, but it was the news that we'd been playing around.

MCNAMARA: It was still a great shock for us, all of the people who were in Beirut. Certainly it was for me, and I think that it was for everybody else. We were shocked. Well, that's about all you can say: we were shocked.

Q: *Well, how did it play in Beirut? The people that you were in contact with, what were they saying? Did you get any reflections of what our actions were doing, or not?*

MCNAMARA: Well, the Lebanese had always assumed that conspiracies were being hatched. They expected such duplicity. I don't think it came as such a great shock or surprise to the

Lebanese. That's how the Lebanese operate. It wasn't any big deal for them.

Q: *What about Kelly when he came back? How long was he back before you left?*

MCNAMARA: He came back in about a month after being denounced by Shultz. He was held in Washington, but Shultz finally allowed him to come back. I doubt that all was forgiven, but Kelly too was obviously just another dupe in a very duplicitous game. I suspect that Shultz himself was involved in some sort of power struggle in Washington.

Q: *Because he became assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs.*

MCNAMARA: Near Eastern Affairs, yes.

Some months later Kelly prepared to go on leave. That morning, just before his departure, prime minister Karami was killed in a helicopter. Somebody put a bomb in the helicopter, behind his seat, and killed him. They didn't knock the helicopter down, just killed him. Somebody very clever, obviously, who didn't want to knock the helicopter down. Well, Kelly went off on his leave, and I was chargé d'Affaires, with a dead prime minister. It was an interesting couple of weeks.

By this time, a tenuous peace had settled over West Beirut. I had gone over and picked up David Jacobsen when he was released. Later, I had visited Karami in his apartment a couple of times. Then, when the grand mufti of Beirut had a service for Karami, I attended. I thought it was important for us to share the grief over the violent death of a moderate Muslim leader.

Another time I was chargé, I made arrangements to go up and see former president Franjieh in North Lebanon. I'd been trying to get a meeting with Gemayel, to deliver some message from the State Department. For some reason, he kept putting me off. When he found that I was going to North Lebanon to see Franjieh he had his protocol man call late the night before my departure to inform me that Gemayel would receive me the next morning. I knew goddamn well that he was trying to keep me from going to North Lebanon. So I said, "I'm sorry, I'm committed to go to visit Franjieh tomorrow morning. I'll come to the presidency as soon as I get back."

The protocol man replied, "Oh, no, you've got to see the President right away."

I said, "I'm sorry, I've already committed myself to President Franjieh."

So he said, "Well, okay."

Later, I told April this, in one of our telephone conversations. She went off like a rocket. She said, "You did that to the president? You're going to get PNGed!" [persona non grata]

I assured her that, I'm not going to get PNGed. Gemayel is completely dependent on us. He's our creature. He controls nothing outside his palace. He's not going to react. His relationship with us is crucial to him."

I reasoned that one has to demonstrate to the Lebanese every now and then that you're a man, by

saying no to something. The representative of the United States must insist on being treated with dignity by someone like Gemayel. If you don't do that, they'll have no respect for you, and they will walk all over you. That's just the way Lebanese are.

But she said, "Oh, you're going to get thrown out." I had one foot on the boat, according to April. "I'll try to patch it up with the ambassador," April said.

The ambassador in Washington was a complete ass hole. He was Gemayel's man and April's contact. I gather April pleaded with him to assure Gemayel of our eternal support and apologized for a clumsy chargé d'Affaires. Clearly, for anyone with any understanding of the Lebanese, this was the wrong thing to do.

Anyway, I went to North Lebanon, saw Franjieh, came back, and I saw Gemayel not long after. He was all smiles and affability as he inquired, "Did you enjoy your trip to North Lebanon? How is Mr. Franjieh?"

I replied that I had enjoyed the opportunity to get out of the narrow world of East Beirut and assured him that Fanjieh was in good health.

He kept me in his office for an hour and a half, in our first informal, friendly chat. He recounted much of the history of Lebanon, albeit from his own point of view.

He kept me a long time and went out of his way to be very pleasant and friendly. Obviously, my calculated gesture of independence had impressed him favorably. April's version of fore-lock tugging obsequious diplomacy was not so affective in macho Lebanese circles.

Gemayel had set up a think tank of sorts. During the course of this meeting, I told him I'd love to visit it, and maybe I could get some help from some of the research institutions in the United States. I told him of my connections with Hoover. He was delighted with the prospect.

After that beginning, our relationship was warm and relatively informal.

My relations with April hit an all-time low as a result of this incident. They never really recovered. I lost whatever respect I had for her. Her low opinion of me was apparently confirmed. The fact that Gemayel went out of his way to praise me to Kelly only further rankled our troubled relationship.

Another time, not too long before I left, Kelly went off, and this was when Karami was killed. I can't imagine why Kelly left, with the prime minister just having been assassinated. This was a bit like April leaving on vacation two days before the Iraqis invaded Kuwait.

The CIA acting station chief came to me one day with what he described as "absolutely airtight intelligence" that the Syrians were going to start shelling East Beirut the next day. I didn't believe the report. Nonetheless, I could not ignore it. I was chargé and responsible for the safety of our embassy personnel.

Q: *Was there any reason why they'd be doing this?*

MCNAMARA: I don't think so. It didn't make any sense to me. I didn't believe his report.

Major Hurley, a Marine major who was the assistant DAO, was acting in place of the regular DAO. Oddly, the station chief, the DAO and the ambassador were all absent. I sent Hurley, who was a very good officer and the best Arabic speaker in the embassy, to check out the report. He went right up into the forward positions of the Lebanese army, facing the Syrians, but could not find any evidence of Syrian preparations to mount a bombardment. They hadn't changed any of their dispositions. Hurley could see into their positions, and saw that they hadn't brought up extra artillery or extra shells. They hadn't even broken out their stocks of shells or anything. So he came back and told me that, "I don't believe it." There are no indications of any of the normal preparations for bombardment. Moreover, the Lebanese army commanders were equally skeptical of the report.

Hurley's observations reinforced my own doubts. Nonetheless, I felt I must take some precautions.

I didn't want to alert Washington and get them excited, because I didn't think there was anything to the report. But I still wanted to take some sort of precautions, so I asked the American colonel who was in charge of American military assistance, who controlled the helicopters coming into Beirut, "Can you have a helicopter come in to pick up some people tomorrow?" We had a helicopter scheduled for the day after. I asked, "Could you put it up one day? Please see if you can't get the schedule changed." And he said he'd do what he could. I told him privately my reason for asking and warned him not to pass this info on to the military in Europe who controlled the helicopters.

I told the non-essential people that anybody who wanted to go to Cyprus could have a long weekend off. This was my way of drawing down the numbers without doing so officially. I also sent out people who were in Beirut on temporary duty. Thus, it was not an official drawdown.

Anyway, the colonel failed to abide by my admonition not to pass on the questionable report to the H.Q. in Stuttgart. Rather he told them that I had ordered a drawdown, and wanted an evacuation helicopter the next day.

In Europe, they sent off flash messages to Washington that Beirut was drawing down personnel.

In the middle of the night I got calls from April and Kelly, who was in Washington, asking what the hell was going on.

I explained the situation and my reluctance to get people in Washington excited over a report that was of such questionable reliability. I insisted that I had taken the minimum prudent action.

George Shultz was in Iceland at the time at a summit conference. He raised hell because nobody told him that we were drawing down. I learned a hard lesson not to try to be too clever. Tell Washington everything in such circumstances. One can never rely on nervous subordinates following instructions. I had made a mistake, not in the way I handled the situation on the ground but in my dealings with Washington. I had played right into April's hands.

Kelly came back, and I admitted to him that I should have called on the telephone and warned the Department. The problem was that my relations with April Glaspie were bad, and therefore that personal element probably entered into my reluctance to call the Department. If it had been somebody else who was country director, I might well have called. But under the circumstances, I didn't. Plus, I didn't like to use the telephones, because I didn't think it was a good idea. My action was further influenced by a fear that April might well have gone off in an unexpected way and declared that we had to have a formal evacuation. God knows. You couldn't predict what she was going to do.

So, anyway, that was a small tiff that I had.

But when Kelly got back and started to chew me out, I told him, "Look, I did what I thought was right. Now maybe I should have called somebody. But that's the only thing I would change. Here, I did what was right under the circumstances."

He said, "But the report was incredible."

I said, "I know that it was incredible, but I couldn't completely ignore it. Here's a guy coming in and saying that he has absolutely clear intelligence, reliable from a wholly reliable source, that we were about to be shelled. I couldn't ignore that, not completely. I could discount it, but I couldn't ignore it."

That's the way I felt, anyway. And I'm sure that if I had gotten somebody killed, ignoring such a report, that I would have been drawn and quartered. My punishment would not have ended in a chewing out from John Kelly. I would have been railroaded out of the Foreign Service. Moreover, this would have been perfectly justified.

Q: *You mentioned that you picked up one hostage in West Beirut. How did that come about?*

MCNAMARA: At the time, things were still in turmoil in West Beirut when we got word that a hostage had been released. He'd been left on the doorstep of our old embassy in West Beirut. We still had a Lebanese guard force over there, keeping the embassy intact. I told Kelly I thought that I should go over and pick him up. I suggested forming a convoy to make a quick run into the West and return. Kelly said he wanted to go himself. I advised against it. Rather, insisting that he would be needed to control things from the embassy. I was more expendable. We couldn't risk losing the ambassador in doing something like this, but we could risk the DCM. It was more important that he be at the center, to control things if anything went wrong. He finally agreed. Kelly is no coward; he didn't stay because of any fear for his personal safety.

Q: *No, it makes absolute sense. You just couldn't put the ambassador in something like that. That's showboating*

MCNAMARA: That's right, that's all it would have been. You could, under the circumstances, risk the DCM, but you couldn't risk the ambassador. You had to have somebody of some stature there, somebody who understood what was going on and the consequences, but not the ambassador. So,

anyway, that's what we did.

We put together a convoy of half a dozen vehicles, armed to the teeth, and we went over to this old embassy. Jacobsen was there with our Lebanese guards. I picked him up, put him in the car, and brought him back. That's all there was to it. Thank God for our Druze guards over there.

I guess this isn't any great violation of security anymore. At this period, the Delta Force was trying to work up a hostage rescue operation. They developed information that they thought was reliable, that the hostages were located in an old underground garage in West Beirut. They had taken pictures of the building. As it was put to me, they said they were 85 percent sure that's where the hostages were being held. Information was being developed by both the CIA and other military intelligence sources. Thank God, the 85 percent just wasn't good enough to go on. The CIA station chief had reservations, and I certainly had some. Kelly shared our misgivings. We just could not afford another attempted rescue fiasco.

When Jacobsen was released, I asked him where he was held?

He was certain the location was near the airport in southern Beirut.

Now the airport is miles away from the place where our intelligence operators thought that the hostages were being held.

Jacobsen said, "I know it was near the airport, because I could hear the airplanes taking off and landing. And I heard the sound of waves hitting a beach."

Thus, he reckoned that he was near the beach and near the end of the runway of the airport. Thank God we did not act on the intelligence reports.

I am convinced that we were being purposely misled, fed misinformation, set up. Our rescuers might well have walked into a bloody ambush.

Jacobsen's debriefing ended planning for that operation.

Jacobsen was a funny guy. When we were coming out of West Beirut he asked, "Give me a gun, and we'll go down and get those bastards right now!"

We were still in West Beirut, and I said, "No, no, we're getting out of here. Out we go." Anyway I got him out.

Q: *Was Kelly still ambassador when you left?*

MCNAMARA: He was still ambassador, yes.

When I came back to Washington, after having been DCM and chargé for two years in Lebanon, I didn't get to talk to anybody. April, the country director, never had time to talk to me. Dick Murphy didn't show any interest at all. Nobody.

Q: *This wasn't as though you were getting the freeze; this is the sort of thing that happens too often in the Foreign Service.*

MCNAMARA: Well, in that kind of situation, I think it was the freeze. And I think it was really stupid, under the circumstances. Jesus Christ, whether you think the guy has any sense or not, you ought to at least talk to someone who has just spent two years in a place like that. Just have the courtesy of talking to him. Besides, you just might learn something.

Q: *It's incredible.*

MCNAMARA: Well, I found it incredible.

Finally, I saw April in the hallway, and she said, "You know, you really ought to go home and take it easy. Go on vacation." That was that. And that was only by chance.

A friend of mine, who was an Arabist and who was in Lebanon with me, had known April for a very long time. He made a comment to me long before I had any problems with her and long before she went to Iraq.

WILLIAM A. PIERCE
NEA; Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Washington, DC 1987-1989

Mr. Pierce was born and raised in Georgia and educated at Davidson College and the University of Georgia Law School. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he was first posted to Surabaya, Indonesia, followed by a tour at Damascus, Syria. After completing Arabic language studies in Washington and Tunis, Mr. Pierce was assigned as Political Officer to a number of Arabic speaking posts, including Khartoum, Jeddah and Riyadh. In Washington, Mr. Pierce dealt primarily with Middle East Affairs. His final post was Surabaya, where he was Consul General. Mr. Pierce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: What about the situation in Lebanon? What was it at that time?

PIERCE: Lebanon had fallen into chaos or was beginning to fall into that long, long period of what they used to call “igar rabat,” the troubles. When I first got there, or shortly after I got there, was when our ambassador there and econ counselor were murdered. And that’s when the embassy closed its operations, leaving a skeleton crew. They no longer used any form of exit out of Lebanon except for Damascus, so therefore over the next six months or so we became their logistics pipeline. The bodies of our two dead diplomats were carried out to Damascus and put on aircraft – I think they were C-130s – which we had arranged to come in on special dispensation into the airport to take them out. I stand corrected. I’m not sure about that. The two aircraft did come in bringing armored cars and we used them to pull out household effects that had been left in

Beirut when the evacuation occurred out of the embassy, which was just prior to that. The only problem with the armored cars was there was absolutely no clearance into Syria for them and we had to keep them in Damascus for eight or nine months, I believe, before we could get enough documentation to move them into Beirut. The cars were Ford LTDs and heavily armored. The irony of it was that they were so quickly assembled, or quickly prepared, that they didn't even have sufficient brakes to stop with all of the extra weight they had. When they finally went to Beirut over the mountain, it severely hampered their ability just to get through safely.

We went to Beirut or into Lebanon twice, once through the embassy and once in an attempt to get some equipment that we needed commercially. On the first occasion we had maybe 20 people there overnighted. The second time when I went into a different part of Beirut – the outskirts of Beirut – I was very impressed. Always you had Syrian checkpoints at that time; Syria had begun occupying the place more extensively. On one occasion I was stopped by a Syrian and asked where I was going and I told him, and he said, "Well, there's going to be a battle there in about a half an hour."

I felt that was very nice of him to tell me that and I didn't go. *(laughs)* On another occasion we were allowed from time to time to go into Shatura, just across the border in Lebanon, to buy foodstuffs since we couldn't get a lot in Damascus. Again, we had a few Syrian checkpoints and at one occasion came to a Syrian checkpoint just on the other side of the border into Lebanon and there was this sort of typical Syrian guard who looked like, "What the hell am I here for stopping cars?" We came up to him, and he was one of my FSNs who had been dragooned into the military four months earlier and there he was in the middle of nowhere, stopping cars.

Also at the time, as I got to know my wife better and we became more involved, she would frequently go home to Lebanon and she lived in the south not too far from Sidon. To me it was always aggravating and very disturbing that she would take these trips by taxi – there was a very good taxi network between Sidon and Damascus – and she always said it was no problem. And even the days that Beirut was closed, the taxis would veer off through the mountains in the southern part of Lebanon to get to Sidon. She convinced me – this was after our Damascus tour, we did visit her family in the south – aside from that, the situation in Damascus was driven by the situation in Beirut. The hotels and houses were rented by Lebanese trying to take refuge in Damascus. Hotels were full of Lebanese who had fled. Obviously the richer would go to Europe or elsewhere, but a large number were in Damascus. Our consular section was inundated by Lebanese trying to get visas to America, which was very hard for them – as were the consulates in Amman and Nicosia and Athens.

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Q: Well now, going back to the Intifada, this was in a way the first time I suppose you were up against I don't want to use the pejorative term but, basically the influence of the Israeli lobby on our policy wars.

PIERCE: No. It's not the Israeli lobby so much, but understandably when you're involved in promoting dialogue and trying to move towards some type of negotiation between two sides, you don't castigate one side and not the other. You castigate both of them equally – that's the cycle of

violence argument – or you are more muted. Given our relationship with Israel there was always a predilection to give the benefit of the doubt in terms of Israelis on the ground calling the shots, or to look carefully when the facts suggested there was some egregious issue that our attention needed to be called to. A good example of that is the Security Assistance Act, where the issue of self-defense was always a factor in what we supplied people or foreign countries. Whenever Israel would make aircraft raids into Lebanon, by and large with our aircraft…

Q: And with our bombs.

PIERCE: And with our bombs, the question that would always come to the press spokesman was, isn't this a violation of the…

Q: It was an obvious violation, wasn't it?

PIERCE: I'm not going to make a judgment.

Q: Okay. (laughs)

PIERCE: That was not an issue that we had to work during my time in Public Affairs. Those issues happened primarily in the early '80s.

Another interesting area was Lebanon; I worked very closely with the Lebanese desk. In terms of internal Lebanese politics, one side or the other – mainly on the Lebanese Christian side – will always attempt to show themselves close to the Americans. This is a prominent political dynamic in Lebanon. Quite often we would learn about manipulation involving one side or the other, each trying to position oneself to become president or to have a better policy or to gain an advantage over an opposing side. Quite often I, with the Lebanese desk officer, would work up guidance which did not address a specific issue, but which would emphasize our position of basic neutrality and that we supported no one parenthetically; lack of preference for any simple person or group – like this guy who is exaggerating his ties with us. Now this type of guidance would never be asked for, so what you would do is call up one of your favorite Lebanese journalists and you would say, "If the question, whatever it is, were to be asked today, I think you might have a story."

JOHN T. MCCARTHY
Ambassador
Lebanon (1988-1989)

Ambassador John T. McCarthy was born in New York, New York in 1939. He received a bachelor's degree from Manhattan College in 1961 and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. His career included positions in Belgium, Thailand, Pakistan, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Lebanon. Ambassador McCarthy was interviewed in 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What was the situation in Lebanon, at that time, to cause this?

MCCARTHY: The civil war which had started in 75 was still underway. It had gone through various changes over the years but at that stage there were 7 or 8 American hostages being held by Shiites in the western suburbs of Beirut. The American embassy had been blown up 2 different times, the American barracks had been blown up, this is all in the early '80s.

Q: An ambassador had been assassinated.

MCCARTHY: An ambassador had been killed.

Q: Frank Meloy.

MCCARTHY: So, it was known to be a dangerous place.

It was sort of at the climactic moment, of course you never know that, except by hindsight, because although Lebanese for years had been saying this is wasteful, we have to find a way out. They really were on the verge of finding a way out. That was going on while I was getting ready to go there and while I was there.

Anyway, the hearings took place, the confirmation vote took place. I think by early August I was confirmed. And then, unlike most ambassadors who pack their bags and go to post, then began a period of consultation as to whether or not it made sense for a new American ambassador to go to Beirut at that particular juncture.

This was interesting because Dick Murphy was the assistant secretary at the time, John Kelly, whom I'd already replaced in an earlier job as we discussed this morning, was still on the ground in Beirut. The Lebanese, again, had not been able for a variety of reasons to figure out what was going to happen next in terms of presidential succession. Amin Gemayel, who was the president of Lebanon, was due to be replaced in an election to be held in the parliament no later than September 23rd. There were the usual number of candidates. In Lebanon you have to be a Maronite Christian male to be the president. I don't think I ever met a Maronite Christian male who didn't think that he would make a really dandy next president of Lebanon.

So, you have to have some sort of a shake-out of the candidates and the shaking-out wasn't happening. The principal method for shaking things out in 1988 seemed to be to get approval from the president of Syria, Hafez Al Assad, that you were indeed the candidate. So all of that year, various Lebanese Maronites would tool over to Damascus, if they didn't think they would get killed in the process, if they hadn't already burned their bridges, to try and get Assad to somehow bless their candidacy. Of course Assad, playing his cards very close to his chest, wasn't giving.

Q: He was the president of Syria.

MCCARTHY: He wasn't giving any clear signals to anybody. There was a lot of debate in the state department, I think, as to whether or not we should get involved in this process of electing the Lebanese president. In the end, Dick Murphy and a woman named April Glaspie, did go on several missions to Damascus to talk with the Syrians, to talk with the Lebanese. I guess to try to broker an

election, is one way to put it.

There were various lists. Gosh, all of this comes flooding back, I think I've been repressing this kind of stuff because it was such a mess. Murphy had lists, other people had lists, there must have been all sorts of different lists. At any rate, the magic deadline came and went and there was no election, there was no agreed candidate. There was no president.

To get back to me, I kept sitting in Washington because Dick and other people felt that while we were trying to negotiate this outcome we might as well keep Kelly in place. There was no sense messing up McCarthy and putting a potential blot in his copybook if this didn't turn out right, and of course, it didn't turn out right.

So, I didn't go until the day after there was no longer a president of Lebanon. This was all by pre-arrangement. I got on a plane and I flew to Cyprus and I got on a helicopter, because we didn't make any movement in or out of Lebanon in those days, official Americans, it hasn't really changed, except by helicopter. Our own US army helicopters from Larnaca, I take it back, I think they were Air Force helicopters when I first came, they shifted it to army later on, right to our own helipad on our embassy compound in Beirut.

I got there the day after Amin Gemayel was no longer president. I did call on him as an act of respect. There unfortunately were already 2 prime ministers. There was a self-appointed Christian prime minister whose name was General Michel Aoun. The previous Muslim prime minister remained in office. They sort of dismissed each other in the days that followed. But for all of the time that I was on the ground in Beirut, I lived in East Beirut which was an area controlled by the Christian prime minister who was also the head of the army, but I visited fairly frequently the Muslim prime minister. I went with a set of credentials, I guess, addressed to no one. I was instructed not to present my credentials to anybody until there was a president. My credentials sat around for a long time.

Q: Just to get a feel for this, as you saw it in 88, what was the root cause of the civil war?

MCCARTHY: The root cause of the civil war was, I think, basically inequity and a political system that was frozen in time and no longer, in any way, reflected realities on the ground in terms of the ethnic mix. What this principally meant was that there was an over-representation of the Christians in the parliament and an under representation, particularly, of Shiite Muslims. That was one aspect of it.

I think another aspect, as I understand life in Lebanon up until that period, was that all of the people who were in the system, including a few Shiite Muslims, certainly Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians and Maronite Christian politicians, the old system worked very well, to the advantage of a small number of people. Those people had plundered the system, had benefited from the system over and over again, weren't about to expand it.

So you had this over-representation of Christians and you had system that wasn't fair, period, in terms of the overall population. Then there were overlays, you had a large Palestinian refugee population in the country, you had active Palestinian attacks on Israel from southern Lebanon --

those are the root causes. By the time I got there they had almost disappeared in a wealth of day-to-day events which rotated around the fact that there wasn't really a Lebanon anymore except in a few instances. What there was an area of 10 or 12 different mini-states run largely by different militias or by the army. It wasn't just a Christian or Muslim breakdown.

I got around a lot of the country, not the whole country, as you traveled to the east you run up to the Druze area run by Walid Jumblatt; as you went to the north you went to a Sunni Muslim area dominated pretty much by the relatives of the assassinated Sunni prime minister named Karame; if you went a little further north you went into a Christian area; if you went further east there was another Christian area; if you went south of Beirut, which I never did, around Sidon, there were some Sunni guerrillas in charge; and another area that was a little Christian area that was pretty well isolated from the rest of it; further south around Tyre there were Shi'a in charge. It was very complicated and not much was working.

The other change, I think, that was impelling the Lebanese toward a solution in the years that I was there, was that the Lebanese pound, which had remained remarkably stable from 75 till about 85, had suddenly started crashing through the floor. The pound went from 3 or 4 to the dollar where it was pretty constantly for that decade, it kept going to 100, 150, 200, 300 -- it was really starting to disappear as a currency. This was affecting peoples' incomes, the way people lived. I think a lot of the issues, that had somehow not come to the fore for the first decade or so, were really falling apart in the late '80s.

Then, of course, this laughable situation where there was no president and there were two prime ministers. And, every other agency in government began bifurcating into two. There were 2 foreign ministries to worry about, to the extent that any service existed. They were also beginning to break up into at least 2 ministries.

Q: How could you operate? If you can't go in the regular way, if you have to be helicoptered into a country, you've got areas like the South where you can't go. It's not just you as the ambassador but obviously the rest of the staff. In a way, what were we doing there and how did you operate?
MCCARTHY: Again, I wasn't starting any of this, I got there 13 years after it had begun so a lot of the routine of a normal embassy had disappeared years before. For instance, in the wake of the embassy bombings, somewhere along the line we had decided it was no longer prudent to issue visas. So we had a consular officer at the embassy, very interesting woman, but we weren't doing normal consular work.

Q: Who was that?

MCCARTHY: Her name was Jean Bradford. We weren't doing consular work, we weren't issuing visas to the Lebanese. The kinds of movement, on and off an embassy compound, that you would see almost in any country, weren't happening here.

We had an AID officer and we had an AID program of some size. But, again, it was an indirect program. In other words, the programs all went to nongovernmental organizations and were administered by them. We basically had no administration.

When I got there, there were about 30 people or so. Most of the traditional functions of an embassy were held by maybe 1 person or maybe 1 person might be wearing 2 hats. USIA did not have anybody on the ground. They had decided, a year or two before that, that they couldn't do the normal kinds of public programming that USIS would do. The political officer did some of that, to the extent that he could. And, of course, we had some really good FSNs. A lot of the life of the embassy was restricted. We had marines. They went out a little bit on the weekends.

It changed a lot. I was actually on the ground for about a year and the first 6 months were reasonably normal within this fairly restricted kind of approach. The second 6 months nobody did anything and you could begin asking yourself, "Why am I here?"

But the first 6 months, I went around. I called on everybody in town. It was kind of fun. I had this photo gallery of me and religious leaders basically. I called on the Maronite patriarch, I called on the Orthodox archbishop. There was a large Armenian population in Lebanon. There were Armenian Protestants, Catholics and orthodox Christians and they each had a religious leader. I called on the guy called the Sheik el Akl, the religious leader of the Druze. I called on the Shi'a clerics, whom I could get to. There was a guy named Shamsuddin who was a major religious Shi'a religious leader. I thought it would make sense to call on Mohammed Fadlallan, who was a more radical Shi'a religious leader. But I couldn't convince anybody in Washington that made sense.

At any rate, I had photos of me with a bunch of religious leaders. I certainly met Nabih Berri who was a Shi'a politician. For a while it wasn't clear back here if I should be calling on him or not. Eventually, I was authorized. I called on basically anybody whose hands were not so tainted with violent acts that it would be misconstrued. So I had a very active schedule of political consultations.

In the early months it was listening to, particularly to the Maronites, as to whether or not, or to what they saw next as a way to get a president elected and how you would do that. This was a remarkably difficult time, I'm sure, from the Lebanese point of view. Because they had all assumed that like every other presidential election, they would probably come smack up against the deadline, and yet when they got to the last minute, somebody would get picked! There would be a president. This time, they screwed up so badly that there wasn't a president and they really didn't know what to do next. They were scared about what was going to happen next, basically.

I think they were intimidated. How do we get out of this bind? Nobody had any good ideas for a while. It was a time when people were re-assessing where they go next. I was listening, as much as anything. We were not too interested in new initiatives because the Murphy initiative had been an investment for us and we hadn't gotten anywhere either. I think our sense was -- okay, we thought we could help, we thought it would make sense; you guys didn't like our advice.

We did want them to go for one president. It wasn't so clear that we actually had a candidate but we had endorsed a process which would have led to the selection of one out of a very small number of people. They said no. Those people aren't the ones we want. So, I think our sense for a while was to let them stew in their own juice and see what happens.

Q: What were you doing? Going out and saying, I'm here to listen and that's sort of it?

MCCARTHY: Pretty much. On both this narrow issue and the broader issue. There was this real sense. The first thing that any Lebanese politician would tell you was that -- we can't go on like this, we've got to make a deal. So there was a sense that the time had come to make a deal.

But, they weren't scared enough, I suppose in retrospect. There was no violence. There was very little, there was the usual very low level of violence for those first few months. I think people just got used to it as yet another iteration, or another elaboration of this funny Lebanese game of politics and it was going to be all right. Therefore, not much was happening at all.

Q: Sometimes you get into a situation like this, Northern Ireland is a good case in point, where the man with the gun, pretty soon this becomes the way of life. They're getting their support and matching money and power and all this. So the politicians can go twitter away but the men with guns they don't see peace as being beneficial to them.

MCCARTHY: I think that's true. I think that was sort of what was happening. For the first several months, this was September it wasn't until January of 89, at the end of the month, that the first inter-Christian violence broke out. People stepped back and said, "Oh, this is going to be really terrible."

People were getting used to two prime ministers, no real government, not much going on as a normal way of life because there was still bread in the stores. The amazing thing about Lebanon, people have told me this and I sort of thought: Yes sure, this is not going to be true. But it was true. Life was incredibly normal. In those first few months there were concerts to go to, there were art openings in various galleries and museums. There were as many lunches and dinners on an incredibly lavish scale as anybody could possibly want to go to. The American ambassador was one of everybody's favorite guests. So it was rather an intense way to begin a new assignment which was very typical of other places you'd been except that the scale was more lavish.

Q: Bob Dillon was telling me about this, the same thing. How easy it was, in a way, to get overwhelmed by Lebanese, particularly Christian, society there.

MCCARTHY: I wouldn't stop at just Christian, the Sunni did very well. Walid Jumblatt and I took to having lunches every once in a while up at his place and he certainly entertained at a very lavish scale. I wouldn't say it was just Christian. I think you saw more Christians than anybody else because we were living in a Christian compound.

Q: How did you get around?

MCCARTHY: It was great. It was expensive and intimidating. I was going to say fun but only one part of me really liked it. I would go out in the company of 2 American and 16 Lebanese bodyguards in a motorcade of no less than 6 vehicles and sometimes more than that. The first day I got into my car there was a revolver on the seat with me. I said, "What's that?" They said ambassador Kelly liked to have that there in case something happened.

In fact, about a week or two before I went to Beirut, John's motorcade was involved in a shoot-out

with a couple of other motorcades. It turned out that it was sort of a mistake, or bad tempers. No one was really trying to assassinate him. But it wasn't clear for a moment or two.

Anyway, my bodyguard said the ambassador liked to have that on his seat. I said that I don't really want to have a gun in the back seat with me. "So if you guys promise you'll take good care of me, I promise I'll never go near that gun, get rid of it." So they got rid of the gun.

The other thing I needed to do was to disarm my staff. In the first staff meeting I noticed that even the Admin counselor had a little pistol strapped to his waist. I think you get into a kind of psychology of violence. Almost everybody was armed. I said I don't want guns in here, someone is going to get hurt. So we developed a system where anybody who was wearing a gun checked it with my secretary before he came into my office for a meeting. I breathed a little easy after that.

Anyway, life had this fairly normal atmosphere in Beirut for the first few months. Within the Christian community there was the Christian prime minister, Aoun, with a lot of support. He was liked because, across the religious spectrum, he was liked because he spoke like a Beirut taxi driver. He was a very humble man of few pretensions. Although he pretended his political analysis was good.

He made, in the first few months, the kinds of statements that every Lebanese really wanted their leadership to make about Syria. He said he would break the neck of Hafez Al Assad, a very injudicious remark because he didn't have the strength to do it. He said that all he wanted was for Lebanon to stand on its own and to be free of foreign influence and that the Syrians should go home and blah, blah, blah. I mean all wonderful stuff.

Obviously if you're going to have a sovereign state you have to have correct but separate relations with your immediate neighbors. This was the rule that most Lebanese politicians had broken over the years. Aoun himself broke it because his way of getting free of Syria was to fall very heavily under the thumb of Saddam Hussein, of Iraq. There were lot of Iraqi -- both weaponry and money. And various Lebanese leaders had developed very close relations with Israel over the years.

So Lebanon becomes sort of a playing field for all of the neighbors in one way or another. Aoun said he was going to reverse all that so this made him very popular. The trouble was that he didn't really have the wherewithal to deliver on any of these kinds of things. Pretty early on, within the Christian community, the other major military figure, a man named Samir Jaja, who was the head of the Lebanese forces which was a right-wing militia that had grown up over the years, he and Aoun started having a falling out.

There was a little incident somewhere up at a ski resort. People who seemed to know told me that what it was a bunch of thugs, from both the army and the militia, arguing over their place on a ski line to get on a lift. A couple of shots were exchanged. Then for about 48 hours there was shelling back and forth between these 2 Christian groups. The army wasn't totally Christian, it was to some degree integrated. But these 2 groups shared control of the Christian part of Lebanon, of Beirut, for 48 hours. This was eventually settled. A truce was put back together. They swore that they would never do this again for all time. But it was a very patchwork kind of affair.

I think it made everyone realize, by the end of January, that the situation that had begun in September wasn't going to last. There were not the financial underpinnings, the political underpinnings necessary to maintain even a fragile kind of society just weren't present anymore and that they were in true serious trouble.

At the beginning of March, so really only 5 weeks later, all hell broke out. Because somebody began shooting across the frontier, between the Muslim and the Christian parts of Beirut. I don't think it's ever been made clear as to who initiated the fighting. My own bet would be that Aoun was getting tired of the stalemate and thought it would be nifty, a good way to get some attention to his problem. He liked to get press coverage particularly in Europe, in France and in the United States of what was going on in Beirut. I think he saw this as a way out, maybe not.

A lot of times in these situations, and that you see in Yugoslavia, or you did see until recently, local people on the ground start something. Someone on the other side responds and before you know it you've got an all out exchange of artillery, when nobody really meant much more than to lob a shell on somebody's rooftop.

But anyway, fighting began in March and continued all the while that I was there, on the ground. I left in early September of 89 along with the embassy staff. The fighting continued until, I think, October when, in fact, the Syrians went in and mopped up Aoun and that was the end of that.

Once the fighting began in March, what had developed in the meantime and we obviously had been a part of the development, was an Arab league effort, once and for all, to bring an end to the Lebanese civil war. I think when the fighting began, the responsible part of the Lebanese leadership realized that this was an opportunity. They really better take it because there wasn't going to be another one.

So, from March on these meetings were sponsored by the Arab league. There was an assistant secretary general, an Algerian, Branim, and a 3-country committee -- Morocco, Saudi Arabia and somebody else but the Moroccans and the Saudis were the biggest players -- were trying to develop a compromise agreement that would recognize, to go back to your fundamental causes, that would recognize the need to have a 50-50 split in the parliament. Implicitly begin a more fair distribution of assets, of government responsibilities among the various confessional communities in Lebanon.

There was a meeting in Taif, Saudi Arabia, that went on for some time. An agreement finally was reached, probably in April, I'm a little hazy here, April of 89, which became known as the Taif Agreement. And then all of the time that I was there from then on was devoted to trying to get maximum acceptance of the Taif Agreement by the various Lebanese factions.

Q: Were we a player in that?

MCCARTHY: We were not a player. We were not a front-line player. This was an Arab solution. We liked it, the American administration supported it. I should tell you next time around something that I'm quite proud of, that I think was very interesting. What happened was that American Lebanese, particularly the Maronites, didn't like the Taif Agreement. Aoun, of course,

never bought off on it. Generated a fair amount of criticism of the administration here among the Lebanese American community.

This was hard to take because this was George Bush. These Lebanese Americans were basically good republicans. It was embarrassing. George Mitchell, democrat, but nonetheless Lebanese American, also was having a hard time dealing with it.

What I wanted to tell about was that when I came back in September of 89, what I did rather actively for the next 3 or 4 months was to go around this country to appear before Lebanese American audiences to explain how we had moved ourselves in back of the Taif Agreement. It was fun and it made a lot of sense, it certainly kept me actively employed.

Q: Basically you left...

MCCARTHY: I think it was September 5 or 6 of 89.

What happened was that, I mean you tell a lot but you don't tell enough. I said that I never presented my credentials all of this time that I was on the ground. Increasingly, this rankled Aoun. Particularly once the fighting started, he wanted us to recognize that he was the prime minister of Lebanon. He didn't like it that I would still see Salim al-Hoss from time to time. He liked it less and less as time went on. Things were getting bad. People were being killed. There were demonstrations in favor of Aoun, there were demonstrations against Aoun. In front of his place, in front of our place, basically all over town. The summer of 89 was a very tense time in Beirut.

A woman I knew who was totally apolitical was killed but very prominent, from a very prominent Orthodox family, was killed one night in her house. A member of parliament was killed one night when he went out on the balcony to see what was going on. He was hit by a piece of shrapnel. One of my neighbors down the street, in this very prominent part of town, was killed one night as he was washing his hands in his bathroom.

There was too much shelling going on. There was too much happening. People didn't like it at all. The ferry was shelled coming from Larnaca. That was basically the Christian lifeline to the rest of the world. There were no more parties. The shelling stopped the aspect of Lebanese life that you said Bob Dillon told you about that went on throughout the rest of the war. There were no more parties. For some poor people there was no more food. And even for someone like me there wasn't much around. I didn't go hungry obviously but there was no more French cheese, there was no more good meat.

People were living in their bomb shelters, including me. In the evening hours they were listening to the radio carefully to see if there was nothing going on in their neighborhood. If that was true then they would go out and forage a little bit in the market or in the stores to see what they could find to eat. It was not fun. It was a very difficult time.

At this stage, there wasn't much for me to do. You could go around and talk to the politicians but they didn't know much, you didn't know much. Nothing much was happening. People were just shelling each other, waiting to see what would happen next basically. My staff wasn't going

anywhere. We didn't want them to go anywhere. We had a couple of drawdowns, we were smaller in number than we'd been at the beginning. It was a time when people were waiting for the next development and didn't know what it was going to be.

Aoun precipitated our -- there were debates throughout the month of August in Washington at the highest levels: should we get them out before they get killed. That debate was ended in a meeting that Larry Eagleburger, who was then deputy secretary, told me about, on the positive side. The decision was: We'll keep them there.

Within about a week after that Aoun decided: I'm going to put a siege around the American embassy in Beirut. So he sent a couple of thousand demonstrators in front of the embassy. They were led by a dumb guy from a prominent Lebanese family, whose name was Tueni. He announced that we were disloyal, that we were not good, we were not supporting Michel Aoun. We didn't issue visas to Lebanese and therefore Lebanese weren't going to let us wander freely around their country either. We would not be allowed to leave the compound without a visa given from his people. And Lebanese wouldn't be allowed in to see us either.

We were, in effect, being taken hostage.

I think Aoun saw this as a way to get himself back on the nightly news in the US. I reported all of this to John Kelly, who was then our assistant secretary. I spoke to the secretary at one stage. There were cabinet meetings all day long in Washington on, I think it was Sept. 5th. The final decision was that we would leave the next morning, September 6th, by helicopter, the whole embassy, which by this time I think we were down to 29 people counting a couple of visitors. That's what happened.

In the run-up to the departure I had a number of telephone calls with Admiral Snuffy Smith, Leighton Smith, the guy who's running the NATO operation in Bosnia now, he was very good. He got us out. The irony is that we didn't leave because of the fighting. In fact, it's interesting, there was an American presence throughout the Lebanese civil war. I think we would have stayed right up until the very end of the fighting. But for political reasons we eventually were driven out.

It's ironic because the guy who drove us out really thought that he would be sort of turning the screws on us just a little bit.

Q: We'll pick up on this at this point.

Today is the 28th of February 1996. I suppose let's talk about the hostages while you were there. In the first place could you explain for somebody who might not be familiar, what was the hostage situation while you arrived and how did it develop while you were there?

MCCARTHY: I got there in September of 88 and by that time there were, I've forgotten the exact number, somewhere between 6 and 8 Americans who had been taken hostage at various stages of the Lebanese development by radical Shi'a who were being held generally it was thought that they were being held in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Some of them had been taken as long ago as 84, it seems to me. Others had been picked up in the time since then. In addition to the Americans,

there were also several Brits, some Italians and maybe a German or two.

One of the Brits I followed very closely because his name was John McCarthy. And I had at least one uncle who would get confused because he would read about a John McCarthy in Lebanon and always thought it was me. I would say, "No, Uncle Joe that isn't me, that's somebody else."

At any rate, there were a number of people who had been taken hostage but the Americans, obviously, were of special interest to us. One of the personal ironies and frustrations to me was, as I said, these people were in the southern suburbs of Beirut and my house, the house where I was living was a gorgeous place on the hillside to the east of the city, and overlooked the southern suburbs of Beirut. So, in effect, I could go out on my terrace and look several miles off to the distance, catch a view of the Mediterranean, see the airport which was in the southern part of the city, and know that somewhere in this urban sprawl that I was looking at were, more than likely, these Americans whom we would dearly love to have liberated. That was one aspect of it.

Living in both west and east Beirut, at the time I was there, were the wives of almost all of these hostages. The ones who were married, most of their wives were, in fact, in town. One of them was even an FSN at the embassy and of course we saw her all the time. The other wives I tried to see whenever they wanted to see me. But we got together occasionally on holidays. They were always invited to the Fourth of July reception. I invited all of them for Thanksgiving dinner and I think they all came. This was a very lovely event.

These women ranged. I mean, some of them, what was her name, the family name is Sutherland but I forgot her first name, she was as calm, impressive, reassuring for the other wives as anybody you could possibly want to read about in a situation of so much stress. She was basically very put together and a source of strength for the others. Some of the others were more concerned, less able to control their feelings. Some of the marital situations were a little bit irregular. Some of the people who tossed up in Beirut during this period of time were adventurers. They were people whose lives had reached a dead end in one way or another in the rest of the world. Some of them had left a wife behind and picked up a girlfriend who might or might not have become a new wife.

They were all quite different, one from the other. They were very interesting. We were obviously there to be as supportive as possible. This night that they were there for Thanksgiving dinner, I recall after a very lovely several hours, I made the tactical mistake of taking them out to the terrace for coffee and we looked over the southern section of the city and some shooting broke out at that stage. Most of them became very upset. They were all very drawn to the fact that their husbands were over there and lord knows what's happening to them. So keeping in touch with them was one of the things that was very much on my mind.

There was lots of pressure back in Washington to obtain the release of these hostages. If at all possible to do an Israeli-inspired Entebbe airfield kind of liberation of the hostages. Not really a terribly likely thing because the kind of intelligence we got about the hostages was very limited. And almost always dated by which I mean we might feel pretty comfortable in November that on October 15, 2 or 3 of the hostages had been held in this or that apartment building with fairly precise coordinates. But the way we found this out almost always implied that they were being moved at the time. There would be a little to-do in the neighborhood and that would come back to

us in one form or another. So the intelligence was, in effect, dead. It wasn't very useful because it was all historic.

Nonetheless there were, and again I am conscious of both my duty to history and the fact that most of the stuff is still probably classified, but various agencies of the US government in Washington were more or less committed to all sorts of rescue schemes. Some of them needed to be restrained. I think what you had to keep remembering was that nobody wanted dead bodies. People wanted living human beings. Therefore, commando tactics while they might appeal, almost always had more downsides than upsides.

Q: There had been in 1979, late 79 or early 80, an abortive attempt to rescue our hostages in Iran. After it was over I talked to a number of the hostages in various times and most of them said, thank God it didn't come off because we wouldn't have all been alive. Was this, our experience there, weighing with you? Understanding that these things, a lot of people get killed.

MCCARTHY: I think that was weighing, perhaps. There were other incidents, it seems to me that the Egyptians, not too long before that, had taken down an aircraft that had been seized by hostages. In the process of liberating the detainees, they killed 50 or 60 of them. Not that we would have done anything as ham-handed as any of that. But, sure, the precedents were not encouraging. But the reality was what was really discouraging.

I think, as the ambassador, my role was to encourage all of these efforts but also to try to make sure that they were grounded in as much reality as possible. I would repeat that nobody at the embassy, and nobody in Washington, on any given day felt that he had a piece of intelligence that was reasonably certain about where hostage A was today. It was much more, as I said, retrospective. They probably were here last week, now they may be there.

Just to tantalize you, this is not to say that this didn't stop a number of government agencies from thinking through what it would take, in terms of vehicles and other kinds of things, to actually effect a hostage liberation at very short notice. Lots of good can-do American minds were put to work so that everything that could possibly be needed, and more than everything, was already in place just waiting to go in Beirut. That caused some logistical problems as well. But I think I'll leave it at that.

The other big hostage development while I was there was, it seems to me this probably occurred in the Spring of 89, was that an American colonel who was working with the UN in southern Lebanon, Colonel Higgins, was seized one day. This is the man who eventually died in captivity. He was never released and he was seriously mistreated as well. But for several days I was on the phone with Washington and working with every Lebanese I knew who could have any kind of impact at all on the situation. To try to find out what was happening, to negotiate a release. But we weren't any more fortunate on that one than we were on any of the others.

I had already left Lebanon physically by the time any of these hostages were released. It began to happen, it seems to me, in the Spring of 1990. I remember one of the first releases I heard about I was in a taxi in Paris where I was, in fact, talking with the French government and a number of Lebanese who were living in Paris about the situation. I was still ambassador to Lebanon but I was

living in Washington at the time. But I was on this trip going around talking to people. In the taxi they announced that one of the first of the hostages, the fellow who had cancer, was let out a little early. He had been released earlier that day.

I guess I would have to say that one of my greatest frustrations was that despite my efforts, and those of everybody else, I didn't have any impact on the hostage situation, that I'm aware of, during the time that I was there.

The other element that was sort of nasty and occurred all the time was that various Lebanese would come to me, and would come to other ambassadors whose citizens were being held hostage, offering to sell you intelligence. And in some cases to sell you living hostages. In one case, I remember a man came and offered me the remains of somebody who had died some years earlier for several million dollars.

We didn't dismiss this kind of thing out of hand either. But experience had taught us that it was fairly rare when any of these people really knew anything. These were the sleazeballs and they were just trying to make a profit on a very distressing situation. But, nonetheless, I would try to check them out when something like that came up.

The British ambassador, while I was there, most of the time I was there, was a man named Allen Ramsey, an old Middle East hand. A very feeling individual. I would often go to Allen and say I've had this kind of information from somebody, what do you think. He would say that guy came to see me last week, I've checked him out, he's not worth anything.

A week didn't go when something didn't occur. Either with one of the wives, with something back in Washington. Sometimes there were these taped releases of videotapes by the hostage holders for one reason or another. Threatening to execute somebody unless something or other was done. That would always send up an alert for a long period of time. There were specific Lebanese. Nabih Berri, the man who ran Amal. When I saw him it was often, in fact, under instructions when there were other problems or possibilities with the hostages. The hostages were a constant presence during my time in Beirut. And yet, I sometimes felt that they could be on the moon, and I on Mars, for all the really direct kind of impact I had on the situation.

Q: What was the avowed aim of this hostage taking?

MCCARTHY: Avowed aim, I'm not sure that there really was one. The people who were holding the hostages were, in fact, Shi’a radicals. The Shi’a felt that they had gotten the short stick throughout Lebanon's independent period. These people were also anti-Israel, were angry that our policy was so supportive of Israel. They were trying to get us to somehow revise our policies based on hostage taking. It's a little unclear.

Several of these hostages, I didn't talk at all about their personalities. Some of them were not exactly soldiers of fortune but were people who to some degree were making a stab at a new life after having flunked out of the old one. But by all means they weren't all like that. Several of them were journalists, very responsible journalists. Some of them were these, Mr. Sutherland, were these people who had devoted their lives, in one way or another, to Lebanese and Arab education.

They were people from either American University or Beirut College. The American institutions that had been around in Beirut for over a century doing a remarkable job of education. Not just for Lebanese but for Arab leaders throughout the region.

I think that some of the Shi'a, these were disinherited people in a sense. Not all the Shi'a but the ones who had become the most radical. I think that striking out at some of these very productive members of the American community was their way of lashing out at the whole establishment as well. It was hard to tell what the motivations were.

I must say that one of the things that I would forget about once in a while, and I think Washington hardly focused on, was that the American hostages were, as I said, 6, 8, or 10 people. The number of Europeans was another 6, 8, or 10 people but this to the Lebanese was a drop in the bucket compared to the thousands of Lebanese who had been taken hostage in one or another battle or confrontation either in Beirut or somewhere else. So that some Lebanese, who I must say were not unfeeling people, would once in awhile express some frustration toward me, saying, "You and your hostages, look at these hundreds of people, look at these thousands of people who have disappeared; who are being held hostage who maybe are alive, maybe aren't alive. All Lebanese citizens and we don't know anything about them." By and large, I think the war ended without people finding out very much about most of these people. Maybe a few of them are alive. Most of them had been held for ransom and I think eventually when it became inconvenient to hold them any longer, had been done away with.

A number of Lebanese saw the fact that we were so focused on the hostage situation as a kind of denigration of the overall problem of the average Lebanese man-of-the-street during the civil war.

Q: Were there any repercussions as what became known as the Iran Contra affair? John Kelly had some problems with this. We're talking about Oliver North in the White House, working deals to try and get the hostages.

MCCARTHY: It was all pretty much, if not exactly history it was certainly public knowledge by the time I got there. John, we've said this before, John is an old friend and if I needed to learn the lesson, I learned from John's own experience that if I was to do anything in Beirut it was to come through cleared instructions from the State Department. I wasn't going to go off following advice from anybody else no matter how influential he or she may have sounded. Not bad advice, by the way, in terms of dealing with the Lebanese. I had in mind your next subject, the thing about Lebanese Americans back home.

Q: One last question on the thing, the longest hostage on the American side was Terry Anderson who was an AP correspondent. His sister gained certain fame, or even notoriety, Peggy Say. I have a long interview with Mike Mahoney who had to deal with her at this end, I think you'd find interesting. What about the hostage group? It became a political cause too, a little bit like the Missing In Action people.

MCCARTHY: While I was in Beirut I was, in fact, screened and shielded from direct contact with those particular people because they were here and I was there. I do know Mike Mahoney. I don't think I met any of the hostage families, other than the wives living in Beirut, before I left Beirut in

September of 89. But once I was back I did sit in on several meetings with Peggy Say and some of the other people. I must say, I have a sister whose name is Peggy to whom I'm very close. When I met Peggy Say I used to think to myself, I wonder if my sister would stand up for me quite as firmly and over such a long period of time as this woman has done.

I was really very impressed with the hostage families. I know they caused a lot of problems for us in terms of the department. But they were frustrated people who were very concerned about their loved ones. I had no problem keeping that in perspective. By and large, I think they served a useful purpose in keeping us all focused on their aspect of the issue.

The hostage relatives I had frequent contact with were the wives who were in Beirut. Maybe I'm deluding myself but I had a sense that in our relationships, we always were in it together. They were always coming to see me to find out what I had to tell them that they didn't know. And to tell me what they had heard recently that might be of interest. We had no real animosity, as far as I know. In fact, much more a feeling of warmth and friendship. So my dealings with the hostage families were quite positive.

Q: Should we talk then a bit about the Lebanese American which is a rather significant community in the United States. How did that affect you? Émigré communities are always, can be a problem for foreign policy anyway, usually. Going back to the Irish.

MCCARTHY: This was probably the first assignment I had ever had where the hyphenated Americans from that particular country were so influential. The Lebanese American community is extremely significant. While I was in Beirut, some of their number included John Sununu who was on President Bush's White House staff. George Mitchell, the Senate majority leader at the time, has a Lebanese mother. There were 2 very active members of congress, Mary Rose Oakar and Nick Rayhall. And then they were scattered around the government, lots of other people as well. So they were, first of all, elected and appointed officials who were of Lebanese extraction who were very interested in the issue. Senator Bob Dole, not a Lebanese American, had a lot of close Lebanese friends and he used to like a briefing every once in awhile of what was going on.

Yes, I was aware of their influence. They were not terribly united and they knew this themselves. The classic lobbyists you would think of in terms of foreign policy are maybe the Israelis and the Greeks because they are very interested in one aspect of American foreign policy. Whatever their divisions may be among themselves, at least in this period they have learned the lesson of speaking with one voice when they approach the American administration. So they would come and they would tell you what they wanted and they would explain why they wanted that. And, because they were so influential, the Greek American lobby and the Jewish American lobby were, in fact, very significant in terms of policy formulation.

The Lebanese had clearly not learned that lesson even though they told themselves they needed to do this. I can recall discussions with John Sununu who worked very hard at one stage, I've forgotten exactly when this was, probably sometime in 89, to get them in to see the president. The meeting was eventually put on the President's calendar. Five or six Lebanese Americans went in. One or two Lebanese sort of slipped into the group with them, people who weren't American but happened to be in town which may have been all right. Maybe it wasn't all right, I think it sort of

violated the ground rules on which the appointment had been setup. But that wasn't the real problem.

What John had told them all to do was to get their act together, to have a spokesman and a common voice. I can remember him saying -- one guy would open up his mouth and the other guy would start tearing him to pieces. This was, Mitchell told me the same thing, this was the classic Lebanese problem. They could no more tell you what they wanted from you than the man in the moon. And yet, they would begin, and they did this with me as well as with the president or anybody else that they came to see, they would grab your hand and say: Mr. Ambassador, Mr. President, Mr. Senator, Mr. and Mrs. whatever you were, you must save Lebanon. And then you'd say okay, but first of all I think it's the Lebanese who have to do it. And secondly, what would you want me to do. And, as I said, if there was more than 1 person, you would get 6 different policy prescriptions.

It's funny, but it was in a sense also a tragic waste of an opportunity because it gave the administration the option not, ultimately, to listen to these people. Because you couldn't. Because their advice, basically one piece of advice canceled out another. It was a very ineffectual lobby considering how significant they could have been.

They didn't confine themselves to lobbying in Washington either. Some of them were, in fact, citizens of both countries or residents of both countries, they traveled back and forth quite frequently. When they were in Beirut, they would ask to come and see me. I would usually say yes. Or they would invite me out to lunch and I'd go. They, too, had something to say but this thing about making sure that your instructions were authorized. There was one couple, they were prominent enough I suppose in terms of republican politics. They would come and they would say that George Bush wants you to do this; the president wants you to do this; John Sununu told me to tell you this. I would think, yes, sure, probably, maybe, maybe not.

There were a lot of Lebanese Americans. They were very interested in getting your ear if you had anything at all to do with Lebanese policy in the US government. And, by and large, they had very little effect. It was too bad because they were smart people.

Q: This is tape 5 side 1 with John McCarthy.

MCCARTHY: Maybe just to finish up that thought, the other thing. Maybe each ambassador thinks he was there at the climatic moment but I think I was in Lebanon at the climactic moment. It was when the Maronites, the Christians, finally figured out that nobody, including the United States, was going to save them -- Michel Aoun was out there saving them but in the process demolishing, bringing Beirut down around his ears -- I think they concluded that they had to make a negotiated deal, that they had to come to a compromise. It was a time of great frustration for the Lebanese including those living in the States, and those of Lebanese extraction.

What I wanted to say was that the embassy, the Lebanese embassy in Washington, which had managed to, if not sit on the fence but at least maintain some sort of a general representation of all Lebanese for most of the civil war, at this period of time a very clever ambassador, a man named Abdullah Bou Habiz, who had been a good fence-sitter for a long period of time, finally (his version), Michel Aoun had told him that unless he sided with him and stopped sending copies of

his messages and corresponding with the Muslim prime minister, Salim al-Hoss, he would confiscate his property and make life very unpleasant for his family. All of whom lived in east Beirut. Abdullah became pretty much tied in with the Aoun camp. The embassy, which had been a kind of neutral territory in Washington, was deserted by everybody who was not a pro-Aoun supporter.

I think the Lebanese official representation in Washington which had been, if not normal, at least it had reasonably normal transactions with both the American government and the American body politic, at this period of time was seen as totally partisan as well. The institutions were falling apart. They were being divided. People, Lebanese Americans, were quite frantic about what was going on.

And what was going on was terrible. There was active shelling night after night. People were being killed. The city was being destroyed even more thoroughly than the damage at times in the past.

Q: What about your dealings with the Syrians? Could you explain what the Syrian situation was in Lebanon when you were there and how you dealt with it?

MCCARTHY: You asked about names. The American ambassador for all of the time that I was in Beirut, we went out at the same time and were very close, closely in touch all the while he was there and I was in Beirut, was Ed Djerejian. I don't know if you've interviewed Ed yet. He's in Texas. He would have very many interesting things to say on this and a number of other things as well.

The Syrians were a military presence in Beirut. They had been invited in an earlier period by a Christian prime minister. We talked about this once in our last discussion. It seems to me the Lebanese have made the same mistake over and over again. It's a small country. It is surrounded by stronger countries. Each of which would have reason to want some sort of a role to play in the country. That being said, no Lebanese politician has ever shown the slightest discipline, or very few of them has ever shown the slightest discipline, in not turning to foreign support when he's run into some domestic difficulty. So the Syrians were there but they had been invited in. They didn't tire of telling us that when we would suggest that they might want to consider stepping out.

At any rate, the Syrians were in the city, in west Beirut, throughout the northern part of the country. I saw them when I traveled in the north. They were in the Bekaa Valley as a military presence. They had allies particularly among the Sunni Muslims. But there were Christians, particularly Orthodox Christians, who had also entertained close relations with Syria.

We, the US government, saw that to be successful, any solution to the Lebanese problem needed to be agreed to by Syria as well as the various Lebanese factions. We talked about Dick Murphy's effort to elect a president in the Spring and Summer of 1988 just before I went there. Syria was directly involved in this effort. Maybe the genius behind the Taif Agreement, the agreement that did bring peace to Lebanon, was that sure while the Syrians went along with it, they did so grudgingly and only because they couldn't afford to antagonize the supporters of this agreement, in particular the Saudis.

This was not an agreement to Syria's strong liking because they, in fact, had not dictated it. Here I am betraying my own strong support for this agreement as probably about as even-handed a thing as you could have got adopted at the time. Whereas a number of Lebanese, particulary the Maronite Christians, see Taif as a Syrian dominated sell-out of Lebanese interests. Sort of the permanent vassalage of Lebanon to Syria. I don't see it that way at all. I think it's a realistic acceptance of the fact that its in Lebanon's interest to have close relations with both of its immediate neighbors.

Anyway, Syria was there. Lebanese politicians spoke of the Syrian card, something that they would play or not play. They spoke about the Israeli card, the Iraqi card, the American card in almost a farcical depiction of the way I think diplomacy works, and influence works. They seem to think that these cards were there for them to play around with at will. That they could be picked up and discarded whenever the Lebanese principal felt like it. Of course, as I said, once you introduce a foreign element into your domestic political scene you have hell to pay before you are able to get it out again.

At any rate, the Syrians were there. I've seen this since I left Lebanon and since the Taif Agreement has come into effect. Anytime there was a particular crisis in Lebanon any number of major players, Hussein Huseini who was the speaker of the National Assembly and a Shi'a politician, Salim al-Hoss the Sunni prime minister, most of the Orthodox politicians while I was there, not so many Maronites although some of them did go during the period I was there, when there was a domestic problem they would get in their car and drive off to Damascus to talk to Hafez Al Assad if they had enough pull to get in to see him. Or to people like Khadam, one of his ministers who was in-charge of his Lebanese policy.

So, there would be a tempest in Beirut and everybody would drive over to Damascus. Either to tell his version of the events or to see if he could get some sort of a laying on of hands from somebody in the Syrian hierarchy. So Syria was present all of the time.

Q: Did you get any feeling from your perspective in Beirut of the effects of 89, 90 in the Soviet Union as it was beginning to crumble and it was a prime supporter of Syria, did that have any repercussions. Did you feel at that time that might have made Syria take a harder look at where it stood?

MCCARTHY: The answer is yes. The Soviet ambassador when I was in Beirut, his name is Vasili Kolotosha, I was allowed to see him. He was in west Beirut so it was difficult to have frequent meetings but we often saw each other. This was a classic Soviet middle-eastern diplomat I suppose, in that he'd spent almost all of his professional career in the region. He went out there first as a student of Arabic, stayed 3 or 4 years. Then came back and worked in Beirut as the interpreter for their ambassador. His Arabic was wonderful. He'd served in Syria, he's also served in Iraq. The last time I saw him he came to my house in Tunis. We had a lovely lunch with the local Russian ambassador. The name of the country had changed in the meantime. Vasili was going off to become their ambassador in Morocco.

To answer your question, it was he, I suppose. You and I have already had a long discussion about my time in Pakistan and how during the years I was there I went personally, and I think the US

government, went from thinking of Gorbachev's perestroika and all sorts of internal changes as maybe just a charade, a window dressing, to thinking of it as something significant. Then I arrived in Beirut, after I had come to know Vasili well enough, say I had been there several months. We were sitting together one day at lunch and I asked him what he thought about the local situation. He said, "John, I hardly spend any time thinking about the local situation. It hasn't changed in years. The players are the same, the problems are the same, the solutions are there if any of them want to make a deal. I spend all of my time waiting for the pouch to come from Moscow so that I can read the latest from Pravda and Izvestia and everything else that's going on. It's incredible."

I think he was putting in very nice words the fact that, at least that particular embassy, also there were lots of problems. I'm sorry, I'm confusing, that was Tunis where, in fact, there were lots of problems. They weren't getting paid from month to month. That was too early for the payroll system to have broken down in Beirut, that came later in Tunis.

Vasili was just fascinated about what was going on back home. He couldn't believe it. He couldn't get enough of it. And, really, was not all of that interested in what was going on in the local scene.

With respect to Syria and what it meant to their own policy, we were beginning to think about things like that. Ed Djerejian, who was in Damascus, was writing some cables about it. But I think it was still pretty early days. I don't think the Soviets had yet stopped writing checks to the Syrians or stopped turning over military equipment. You could see it might be coming but it hadn't actually arrived at that stage of the game.

I mean, what did the Syrians want. If you're interested in my opinion. I think that the Lebanese had a very difficult game to play, a very difficult role to hold because a number of Syrians, and I think Assad is one of them, really don't believe in Lebanese independence. He has now signed off on sufficient Taif related documents to make his official position at least clear that Lebanon is a separate nation state. But he still speaks about the same people being divided between two different states. He still sees everybody as brothers. At his insistence, or the insistence of the Syrian government, these are the only two countries in the Arab world that don't exchange ambassadors because why would you need to have ambassadors, we're not that foreign, one to the other.

I think Syria would love to find a way to gobble up Lebanon and recognizing that's not in the cards right now in the Arab world, or anywhere else for that matter. Assad has settled for having his pernicious influence, or as pervasive an influence as possible over everything to do with the local scene in Lebanon. But, that being said, too many Lebanese politicians succumb to that particular kind of psychology and make his job easy for him. To me the Lebanese are largely at fault for their own situation.

Q: You were there from 88 to 90.

MCCARTHY: I was on the ground till 89 and I had the job until 90. It was 2 years.

Q: What was your perspective of the Israeli role in Lebanon at that time, and our relations with Israel? Your feelings about our embassy in Israel and our whole policy there.

MCCARTHY: First of all, this wasn't the beginning. Again, I got there very late in the day. There was a lot of past history between the two countries, particularly between the Lebanese Christians, the Maronites, and the Israeli government. The brother of the president who left office as I arrived, Bashir Gemayel, who also had been elected president, was blown up before he assumed office, had been very close to Israel. Various of the Lebanese militias, in particular the Lebanese forces, were very close to Israel. So the Israelis had picked one principal player in Lebanese politics but they had influences in other places as well.

So, politically they were very active. All the while I was there, most noon times there would be a plane that would break the sound barrier over Beirut at exactly noontime. These were Israeli jets which were overflying the capital, mostly just to remind the Lebanese that they were there and that they were strong and would punish any use of Lebanese territory to attack Israel.

More to the point, I can recall one day I had an American Army colonel in town. We had just transferred the helicopter command, the people who flew us back and forth to Larnaca had been air force. An army unit had been given that responsibility. He'd come to Beirut. We were having a very nice lunch. The head of the Lebanese air force and his aide had come to lunch as well. We were sitting there quietly and there was an occasional boom in the distance. It seems to me that the air force general said, "Oh, that happens everyday. It's the Israelis breaking the sound barrier."

Then it went on. There was more noise. He looked nervously at his aide who excused himself and asked if he could use the phone. When he came back, he announced that the Israelis were bombing some supposed terrorist operations just south of the city, immediately south of the city. It later turned out that they were so close that they had broken the windows in the weekend home of the prime minister which was just a mile or two away from this place. So, the Israelis bombed sites in Lebanon fairly frequently while I was there.

In southern Lebanon, all the while I was there, there was one Christian militia, the southern Lebanese army, which was Israeli financed, was policing a zone very close to the border with Israel. That was one of the elements in the incredibly complicated Lebanese mosaic. The Israelis were very active.

The other way that I become personally involved, once or twice, was that there is an Israeli pilot, whose name was Ron Arad, who was taken alive during one of the wars, it must have been in 83, he was taken prisoner. He'd been sighted once or twice in the hands of various Shi’a leaders. The Israelis would very much like to know what has happened to him and also there were one or two others who were probably dead but who were, nonetheless, taken prisoner. I would get instructions to try and find out from people in the Shi’a community, if I could, any recent information on Ron Arad or any of the other Israeli prisoners. So they were like we, interested in their hostages. I played a role there.

You asked what kind of relations I had with the American embassy in Tel Aviv. They were less significant than I might have liked. I think I can understand what was going on. It seems to me that Bill Brown was ambassador most of the time that I was there. We spoke a couple of times at meetings, and on the phone once or twice. We exchanged cables a few times. I guess what I was

looking for was more interest in Lebanese-Israeli relations from his point of view, or from the embassy's point of view. I think what I was getting was a rather realistic sense that this was number 10 or 12 on their list of things to do. They were much more involved. Israeli American relations are much bigger, much more complicated, than Lebanon was. I don't want to use the word "side-show" but I think it was a kind of a side-show. It was just a footnote to bigger issues, of Israeli relations with Egypt, with the rest of the Arab world, with us, with the peace process.

The peace process was a particular frustration because, again, this was Baker. Baker was secretary of state while I was there. He was trying to revive a more active peace process. There was the beginning of cable exchanges among the various embassies concerned in Washington. I got an occasional glimpse of what was going on. I can recall asking Washington if I could be included as a regular addressee. The answer I got back, was no, not now. There's nothing you could do. There's nothing the Lebanese could do. I felt it was dismissive. I thought I could at least have read the cables and maybe make a pertinent comment or two. But, again, in retrospect I suppose, it was the appropriate way for Washington to assess the situation. Because, as far as I can tell, Lebanese participation in the peace process has been largely risible. They do nothing until the Syrians tell them that they can. Which means they haven't done very much.

Q: Did the Israelis by their actions, the bombings or incursions or something, during the time that you were there, did they destabilize promising developments or not? Did you feel that it made much difference?

MCCARTHY: No, they didn't destabilize anything. Again, how did we get in this mess. If you go back to, when is it, there was the Cairo Declaration. First of all, Lebanon had been a major location of Palestinian refugees from the beginning. When the PLO left Jordan in 1970 they were taken into Lebanon, and then this Cairo Declaration. Maybe it's in the early ‘70s. Basically, by it the Lebanese agreed that the Palestinians could use their territory to advance their objectives, namely the destruction of the state of Israel.

So, I think from the Israeli point of view the Lebanese were fiddling around in some very dangerous business. Were allowing their territory to be used in a very hostile way and needed to pay the consequences. While individual Israeli attacks were certainly regrettable, you didn't get the sense that any Lebanese government had taken an irrevocable decision to jettison the Cairo Agreement. And say, "Okay, from now on we won't allow our territory to be used against Israel."

There's this peculiar ability the Lebanese have not to see that the actions they take and the decisions they make have effects. That they are responsible for those effects. Time after time you would sit down with them and try to trace things back to their origins. They only wanted to deal with the now. They didn't want to know.

Q: Like talking to the Greeks on Cyprus. They talk about the Turks coming in but they don't talk about why the Turks came in. You get a blank look.

How did you see the role of Iran in these 2 years that you were there?

MCCARTHY: It was active, it was financial. It seems to me, and I don't recall exactly where I got

this figure from, the generally accepted minimum monthly allowances that the Iranians were paying out to various Lebanese factions totaled $5 million dollars. So, they were in for at least $60 million bucks a year. Basically your running-around money. Most of this was going to Shi'a in both the Bekaa Valley and the south. Shi'a radical groups, Hezbollah, that we alluded to in our last discussion.

The Iranian embassy, by everybody's account, was basically a den of spies. It was very pernicious. What they were doing, I suppose, was stirring up trouble for as many of their Arab enemies as possible, and Israel as well. Just keeping a hand in, in general. It was a very active, largely financial, presence. I didn't see them when I was there but that shouldn't surprise anybody anyway.

Q: I'm trying to capture the times of Saddam Hussein, while you were there, I mean Iraq. How did we look upon Iraq at that time?

MCCARTHY: While I was on the ground in Lebanon, Saddam Hussein was the head of the Iraqi government. The way Iraq had introduced itself into the Lebanese situation, we mentioned a little bit of this the last time, was that this Christian prime minister, Michel Aoun, looking around for somebody to get him some running around money at the beginning of his effort to establish his government, had turned to Iraq. The Iraqi embassy had been forthcoming. It seems to me that Aoun went to Iraq a couple of times and was very happy at the reception he got.

I can recall warning him that I thought he was making a terrible mistake. That sure, I agreed with him with regard to his objective of getting the Syrians out of Lebanon sooner or later, but I didn't think getting the Iraqis in was either going to forward that objective, and in the long run, it was going to be just as difficult to get the Iraqis out if they ever got in.

The Lebanese Maronites, at least the faction around Aoun, were getting in over their head with the Iraqi government. There were supplies of Iraqi arms coming into the country. So that's how I saw Saddam Hussein, sort of wearing my Lebanese hat while I was on the ground.

I recall that in the spring of 1990, there was a Chiefs of Mission meeting for the near eastern bureau in Bonn, of all places. I think it had been decided that nowhere in the Middle East was secure enough to hold a meeting of that size, of all the ambassadors. We did it in Bonn, we did it in Bad Godesberg actually. We stayed there and we had the meetings at the embassy in Bonn. We took a ferry back and forth each day for the meetings.

There was a working group on Iraq, there were a lot of discussions. Remember, this is April of 1990 so it was just a few months before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. I can recall that there was very good discussion on this. I think I was on the working committee because of the Lebanese angle, and then there was a sort of plenary discussion of all the ambassadors and people from Washington including the assistant secretary, John Kelly at that stage.

The sense was that we had been trying a softer policy toward Iraq. We'd been trying to see whether in the aftermath of the end of the Iraq-Iran war which was only, their truce was in the summer of August 88, I think. You have to keep all of these dates in mind and I find it harder and harder to do that. But I think it was post the Iran-Iraq cease-fire in the summer of 88 that we decided that maybe

we should try a softer policy, a different policy toward Iraq. To see whether we could, in fact, woo him into a more moderate camp. By the spring of April 1990, the people in charge of that, including the ambassador April Glaspie, said, "This isn't working." There was no sign that this guy is getting softer. And there are disturbing signs, in fact, that he may be about to enter a much more bellicose stage.

I think the conclusion of this Chiefs of Mission meeting was that the policy had to be looked at again because although it had made sense when we adopted it in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq-Iran cease-fire, now, a year later, it wasn't getting anywhere. And, maybe we had to take a look at what we were doing vis-à-vis Iraq.

I guess what I'm doing is trying to defend the people who were in charge of the policy against some of the criticisms I read in the papers immediately thereafter. It was not a dumb policy. It was not arrived at by people who didn't have their heads screwed on straight. Not very long after it had been put in place, the people running it were looking at each other and saying, "This isn't working, we're going to have to take another look at what we're doing."

I think the problem with Saddam Hussein, in microcosm, is what you have with all dictators like that who have total control of their regime. It's our responsibility as American diplomats to try to put together reasonable policies that work with every other country in the world. Some countries, because of the leadership, you just can't find that policy. I think that in April of 1990, we were struggling. We saw that what we were doing wasn't useful but we didn't yet see just how off the reservation the guy was about to get. Nobody had any good alternatives, anyway.

What would have been a better policy before the invasion of Kuwait vis-à-vis Saddam Hussein. And what kind of support would there have been say for total sanctions or something like that either here or with countries in Europe.

Q: At this Chiefs of Missions meeting in 1990, who came from Washington?

MCCARTHY: John Kelly for sure. I'm trying to remember. Bob Kimmitt might have been there. He would have been the Under Secretary for Political Affairs in those days. He might have been there. I don't remember anybody else at a very prominent level.

Q: The reason I ask this is, the Baker administration secretary had the reputation of being a rather close circle. There were a few people around Secretary Baker. There was a real gap between this. At that point they were terribly focused on what was happening in the Soviet Union for very obvious reasons. Part of the problem in dealing within a few months with Saddam Hussein was that we really, things were somewhat on hold because there wasn't the focus of the secretary of state. Did you get any feel for that, looking in retrospect, or not?

MCCARTHY: Yes. I think that is a valid criticism. The Baker bunch were very close-knit, they were very few in number, and they could only deal with one or two issues at a time. I guess maybe one issue full time and maybe another issue half-time. I think part of the problem with Iraq policy was that although say the senior bureaucrats, at the bureaucratic level, were probably ready after this Chiefs of Mission meeting to change the policy. I don't think it was possible to get the attention of the secretary's office in the months that followed. I think that's a fair criticism across the board.

I think that was a real drawback, as I understood it as a practicing diplomat in the years when Jim Baker and I worked for the same department of the US government, it was very rare when you could draw him on the issues I was working on, which were not the ones of his main interest. To shift this slightly, I did meet him. He came to Tunis at one stage when he was launching the Middle East peace process. That was okay. But that had, I guess, become his major issue at that time. The rest of the issues, either in the Middle East or anywhere else, that were of less than cosmic importance, his style of operating didn't allow him to get involved in.

I think it's a very serious criticism of that particular way of operating.

Q: You spent how much time being the non-resident ambassador.

MCCARTHY: A full year.

Q: Did this cause problems? I mean, how did you operate? Where were you living?

MCCARTHY: I was living at home in Washington and I was operating out of the Lebanese desk. My DCM, whose name is Chuck Brayshaw, was living in Nicosia and running a little rump embassy operation there, including being in contact, as best he could, with some of the FSNs who were still working at the embassy back in Beirut. So, we kept a non-American presence there. The embassy was not really open but the FSNs were doing some business. Chuck and one or two other people were in Cyprus, and I was working off the Desk.

I did travel a couple of times to the region. In fact, maybe the single most dramatic event in my life was my presentation of credentials to the Lebanese president. I told you that I stayed in Beirut for a whole year without presenting my credentials. We didn't talk about this the last time.

Q: You mentioned it. No, I don't think we'd come to this.

MCCARTHY: We left in September of 1989. In November of 1989, under the Taif Agreement the Lebanese parliament finally got together and elected a president. There was a president. His name is Rene Muawad. Rene was one of the two or three closest friends I had when I lived in Beirut. He and his wife lived down the road from me. If the shelling wasn't too intense, they would call me up, 2 or 3 nights a week, and say, "come over for dinner." So, I was a frequent drop-in at their place. My other closest friends were a man named Ilyas Harawi and his wife. Ilyas is now the president of Lebanon, he took over from Rene.

Anyway, Rene was elected. Right away there was a strong desire in Washington that I present my credentials to Rene Muawad to show that we had been serious. That we still believed in Lebanese reconciliation and the restoration of a functioning democracy there. We backed the Taif Agreement and the election of Muawad that had followed immediately upon its adoption. And, that we were willing to do business with his government.

So, how do I present my credentials to Rene Muawad. Problem because he's in Beirut and we really don't have a presence there. We don't want, not me personally, but the US government

doesn't yet want to send anyone back into Beirut because Michel Aoun is still there. He's basically occupying the part of the city where our plant is. He has declared his opposition to this newly elected president.

So, we can't go back to Beirut but they want me to present my credentials. The way we do it is that Rene and I have a couple of phone conversations. We're very guarded about what we're saying. I can't remember exactly what code we were using but I don't think it would take a genius to break through it. At any rate, what he suggested to me was the he could arrange to be in his country home, which is a mountain village called Ehden, which is in Northern Lebanon, not too far from Tripoli, some weekend. If I could come there, he would be delighted to receive my credentials in his village instead of in the presidential palace. He wasn't living in the presidential palace anyway because Michel Aoun was still occupying the presidential palace. Instead of in a public building in Beirut, I could come for the weekend. And, during the course of a weekend in the country, I could also present my credentials.

So, we did that. What that meant was that I, and the guy who ran my security detail, and my political officer, and 1 or 2 other people, flew to Damascus. I stayed at the house of the ambassador there, Ed Djerejian, on a Saturday, it seems to me, early in the morning we went by motorcade. We used cars from the embassy in Damascus. We went by motorcade from Damascus, sort of around Lebanon, up into the north, took a road down into Tripoli, then went up into the mountains to Ehden.

We got there in the afternoon, or maybe late morning. Rene and his wife, whose name is Nyla who is now a member of the national assembly. I stayed at their house. We had dinner that night. We had a very nice time, pleasant, sort of talked about what was going to happen next. Rene was a good man. He was one of the Lebanese Maronites who saw the need for compromise. He was rather secretive, played his cards very close to his chest, but was beginning to develop a game plan to bring the country back together again.

The next morning I got up. We had breakfast, just Rene and I. I can remember he sat around in a blue bathrobe, we just chatted for quite a long time. Then his chief of protocol came and said, "Mr. Ambassador, would you please leave the residence now and go down to the hotel, so that we can form up your official party to come and present credentials."

Indeed I did that. We went down to the hotel. We were putting the cars together. Then I recall the chief of protocol came to me looking very worried and said, "Mr. Ambassador." I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "Your car has Syrian license plates. Could we take the license plates off the car?" He thought it would be inappropriate for the American ambassador to be photographed for television that night, arriving to present his credentials in a car bearing Syrian license plates. Of course we took the plates off.

So, we drove up. This is a distance of maybe 200 yards from the hotel to the house where I had spent the night. The part that was incredible was that this is a very traditional Lebanese village. There were about 2,000 women who were ululating all along the path the car was driving. When I got there, this was beautiful, there are incredibly beautiful houses in Lebanon, this place, or at least part of it, was probably built around the 17th century or so. There was one long room with a

coffered ceiling and Rene was at one end of it. I came in the other. I had my credentials. I don't think I've mentioned that I once had them addressed to Amin Gemayel, then I had them addressed To Whom it May Concern. But this time I had a new set. So I did have 3 sets of credentials for this job. This is the only set I ever presented and they were presented to this man.

After the ceremony we had this great big tremendous lunch. Everybody, all of the local politicians, were around. Well, actually, Rene had invited almost everybody. So there were people from all of the different professional groupings. It was a very significant day for me. I think it was a very important day for him. Because it was a kind of laying on of legitimacy. The American government definitely recognized this electoral process, as flawed as it might have been. The Lebanese parliament consisted of a lot of septuagenarians at the time. The electoral process was okay but it wasn't any great shakes.

Anyway, after the presentation. I don't think I spent a second night. I think it was time to go back to Damascus. We sat around and Rene got out his pocket agenda. He looked through it and said: Well, I can see you again on this or that date. I said, "I know I'm supposed to see you fairly frequently, I'll need to get approval for this from Washington. Let's figure out a way where I can call you on the phone and I'll say 'one,' or I'll say 'two,' or I'll say 'three,' and we'll both know what it means in terms of when I'm going to come."

So we basically put together a game plan which would have called for my going to see him rather frequently from then on. Until it was physically possible for us to reestablish our presence in Beirut, we had nonetheless planned on my making repeated trips to meet the president of Lebanon, and see what was up.

So, that's how I left. I went back to Damascus, did spend the night there. We did some reporting. We must have caught a plane the next day, or the day after that. There was some urgency. This was happening in November. There was some urgency because I wanted to get back for Thanksgiving. Everybody wanted to get back for Thanksgiving. We took a plane from Damascus to London, it seems to me, direct. We were sitting in the London airport waiting for our ongoing flight. I got a phone call. I was surprised. You know, a phone call in the VIP lounge in the airport, what's going on.

It was from a woman named Robin Raphel who was then working in London as the Near Eastern person at the embassy. Robin was calling to tell me that Rene Muawad had been killed. That he had been blown up just that morning in Beirut after giving a reception of some kind for Lebanese, the sign of the resumption of relatively normal -- it was Lebanese national day. He was giving a reception. Rene was dead.

So, with his assassination disappeared the plans that I would be going regularly to Beirut. I didn't do anymore of that. In connection with this Chiefs of Mission meeting in the Spring of 90, I remember going to Algeria and Morocco to talk with this Arab league committee. I went to Saudi Arabia as well. That was working on the restoration of peace in Lebanon.

Then in June of 90, I went to Cairo specifically to call on the Lebanese president, now Ilyas Harawi. So, I did have several contacts with the Lebanese government and other foreign

governments about Lebanon. I went to Rome once to meet with the Pope's secretary of state, I suppose, the guy who was in charge of Lebanese policy. So, I did a lot of official things wearing the Lebanese hat between September of 89 and, I guess, June of 90 was about the last time I did something specifically of that nature.

The other thing I did back here, very frequently, was to go and speak to Lebanese American groups about our policy. This was with Jim Baker's encouragement. Baker was interested in making sure that the policy was understood as well as possible. I went to Cleveland.

Cleveland was kind of funny. There was a guy there who was a congressman, who invited me. He gave me a silver bowl which said something like: In memory of the historic occasion of my visit to Cleveland. Basically what he did was offer me up as cannon fodder. He was not a Lebanese American but he had a large Lebanese American group of people living in his district. He had first a breakfast meeting with some Lebanese American leaders, then there was a lunch with a slighter broader group, then there was a reception for several hundred people in the evening. Each of the sessions got more raucous. The smaller groups, in fact, were much more aware of both the limitations and the advantages of this guy, Michel Aoun. Much more savvy, much more willing to listen, as well as to give advice. But the bigger group was really wild.

I did similar things in Los Angeles, in Miami. I went to Waterville and a few other places in Maine, to help out Senator Mitchell a little bit. I went to Houston. It seems to me I did about 8 or 10 of these things, specifically talking to Lebanese American groups around the country. Trying to convince them that we hadn't left the embassy willingly or quickly. We hadn't left because we were afraid. We left basically because we wanted to disassociate ourselves from Michel Aoun's policy that we didn't think was going anywhere. That was good. I liked that experience. I think I did some good. I think people appreciated the fact that they were being given a chance both to listen to me and also to tell me what they thought.

G. JONATHAN GREENWALD
Office of the Special Representative for Counterterrorism
Washington, DC (1991-1993)

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Greenwald earned degrees for Princeton University and Harvard Law School. His first government assignment was General Counsel in the Department of the Air Force. He later transferred to the Department of State, where he served as legal advisor as well as Political Officer, both in Washington and in various assignments abroad. His foreign posts include Germany (East and West Berlin), Yugoslavia, Hungary and Belgium. He also had assignments concerning anti-terrorism.

Q: Is there anything else that you want to cover on the period in Washington, or should we go on to your next assignment?

GREENWALD: I might say there is one other area that is worth touching upon, and it was a major

activity, and that was the return of U.S. hostages from Lebanon. When I came to the Office of Counterterrorism in 1991, we still had -- I can't recall the exact number -- at least a half dozen American citizens who had been held for various lengths of time, quite substantial lengths of time in Lebanon. During those two years, happily all of them were freed and also the prominent British hostage, Terry Waite. There was a lot of activity that went on in terms of working for the release of those hostages. There was a related question that still hasn't been resolved of a missing Israeli pilot, a man named Ron Arad, who many believed and still believe might have survived his crash in Lebanon and might have been held prisoner. There was a belief that Iran had a great deal to do with the situation as Iran had a great deal to do with the timing of the release of our hostages. There is in the press these days a fair amount of talk about the Swiss channel for dealing with Iran. In fact, Switzerland is the representative of U.S. interests in Tehran. We used that channel to communicate on hostage matters from 1991 to 1993 quite extensively. There was the question after all of the U.S. hostages were released as to what now, what did this mean. One of the major blockages toward any kind of normalization of U.S.-Iranian relations was the hostage problem. We had said that many, many times, and we had said that the release of hostages would be regarded obviously very favorably. So there was at least the possibility that some of the kinds of things which now seem to be happening in U.S.-Iranian relations might happen in 1992 or early 1993 when the hostages were freed. One of the questions for us in the Counterterrorism Office was what should our position be. Should we take an extremely hard line? Should we say, well, there are all sorts of indications that Iran still uses methods of terrorism in dealing with its own dissidents, its own Iranian political opponents abroad, it still has ties to the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and so forth, and should we say that until all of those elements of Iranian involvement with terrorism are removed, the position within the bureaucratic spectrum of the Counterterrorism Office is do nothing, make no movements toward Iran, accept no gestures from Iran until you have it all? My own argument, which I think frankly would have been accepted as the Counterterrorism Office's argument if it ever reached that point, was that we should be more innovative in approaching Iran and say this was a major step forward, let's engage them on this subject and try to do with them what we were trying to do with Syria. I was disappointed and a little bit surprised -- I suppose I shouldn't have been in retrospect -- how little interest there was at that time in the State Department frankly in doing anything in Iran, and in particular in the Near Eastern and South Asian Bureau. I suppose I shouldn't have been, because just as the ethos in the European Bureau with regard to Berlin issues was built over the years with the relationship to West Berlin and going back to the Berlin air lift and all of those heroic times, so there was a lack of interest in exploring what might be non-stereotypical in East Berlin. I think the ethos that I encountered in the Near East/South Asian Bureau with regard to Iran was still formed completely by that awful searing experience of the hostage taking plus the political realism of having seen what happened in those tragic comic escapades of cakes being taken to Tehran and the Iran Contra scandal in the middle '80s. So there was a feeling that this wasn't a government that had much to recommend it and that there was an enormous possibility of being burned if one took any initiatives. For that combination of reasons, nobody really wanted to try to do anything new or different.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Co-Chairman, Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group
Washington (1997-1998)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Well the nice thing about it is as career opportunities these things don't get solved.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Then you are off to the peace and tranquility of the Middle East.

SULLIVAN: Right, exactly.

Q: I can't remember had you served there before?

SULLIVAN: I served four years in Israel in the mid-eighties and so this return to the Middle East was as co-chairman of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group it was called.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: From approximately July of 1997 until approximately May of 1998. There had been one prior American co-chair, David Greenlee, who had had it for the first year and technically we ended up swapping jobs. He came back to Haiti to be the Haiti special coordinator, while I went out there and did the co-chairman of this monitoring group.

Q: Okay, what was the status of the Middle East Arab-Israeli situation when you got there in May or June of '97?

SULLIVAN: Okay, when I got there, Netanyahu was prime minister. There were peace American process efforts underway with Dennis Ross, the special negotiator, and we used to meet periodically. When I would be back in Washington I would consult with Dennis and give him a briefing on what we had been doing on our part. His focus, of course, was overwhelmingly the core countries and only occasionally focused on Lebanon but was anxious that the situation not flare up again. The agreement on the monitoring group had actually been reached prior to Netanyahu becoming Prime Minister. The agreement in April of 1996 in the course of what had been called the Grapes of Wrath Operation by the Israeli government into South Lebanon was in retribution for missiles fired into Northern Israel. In the course of the operation, the Israelis had launched shells which wound hitting Palestinian refugees taking shelter in the shadow of a UN camp in Q-A-N-A and resulted in the death of I believe a hundred people. The Palestinians were from refugee camps nearby and had clustered around the U.N. compound in hopes of avoiding getting hit in what was an ongoing series of battles between Israeli and Lebanese forces, Hezbollah really. The incident created an international furor.

Secretary Christopher had gone out and negotiated an agreement with all sides and that resulted in a ceasefire agreement/understanding in April of '96. The understanding provided for establishing the monitoring group with the participation of the Syrians, the Lebanese and the Israeli's. This Israeli's and the Lebanese were the signatory parties to the agreement but the Syrians were also going to be present in the monitoring group. The French had sort of pushed their way into being co-chair and actually I must say that the French were very careful in choosing their representatives as people who got along with Americans. The French representatives were reasonable diplomats but the French always had a certain interest in protecting the Lebanese government. That said, the French and the US found ways to work together.

Q: Did you deal with both the Arab side and the Israeli side?

SULLIVAN: Yes, and how the process was set up, I think my first trip out I accompanied David Greenlee in his last session. It was virtually weekly but there was always a complaint by one side or the other that the other side had violated the understanding. Most often the Lebanese side would complain that the Israelis had violated the understanding by shelling near a civilian village and the Israelis would occasionally complain as well that there had been a firing that had gone into northern Israel. The actual attacks on the Lebanese side were carried out by Hezbollah. So we would meet virtually every week to deal with the one or several complaints. Often, if there was one complaint, the other side would file its complaint in effect in response. We would have to reach an understanding among all the sides in the course of however long it took. Sometimes it would take as short as ten or twelve hours and sometimes it would take four or five days. It was not predictable and it didn't always correlate to the seriousness of the incident. In some ways, I think the Lebanese were interested in using the mechanism to demonstrate that the Lebanese government and the Lebanese army, that was the lead representative in the room, was taking care of the civilian population in the area and they would sometimes hold on to a point a very long time, even though it was a relatively minor incident that didn't result in any casualties. Some portion of this also reflected Lebanese politics vis-à-vis Hezbollah.

The Israelis, of course, had an overall view that if they fired at a target, it was because they had received fire from that target and that in most cases the villages that were being complained about had long been abandoned and the houses therein were being used as shields by the people firing at them. It was a weekly enterprise, sometimes relatively easily resolved and other times not very easily. Sometimes, we would think that there never would be the required agreement among the parties. In at least one case, the conflict escalated to the degree that there was indeed firing into Israel with several katyushas launched into Israel and had some very substantial action by Israel inside south Lebanon.

At the end of the day, I would conclude that both sides had at that point an interest in maintaining the accord; both of them got something out of it. The Lebanese had at that point been able to avoid major Israeli operations within south Lebanon for several years, although the Israelis continued to support the south Lebanese army which was their proxy Lebanese force in the region, comprised mostly of Christians. The Israelis could conclude that they had largely avoided katyusha firing into northern Israel. So although both sides complained mightily that the other side was being provocative and not respecting the accord, at the end of the day they wanted to reach some

understanding. Our final phrase at the end of every meeting would be that both sides would commit to full respect for the understanding in the future, at least until the next time. Because the agreement of both sides was required in the final statement, only rarely was there clear identification of one side or the other for having violated the understanding in those communiqué's. One might find shading in one or another direction that would indicate that, but not direct sharp language because then both sides would not be able to agree to on a communiqué.

I think it did set the tone when relatively shortly after that when Ehud Barak came to power as the Israeli prime minister, he decided to withdraw all troops withdraw support for the south Lebanese army and end the Israeli effort to maintain a security zone inside South Lebanon. It was perhaps in one sense a conclusion after the experience with the understandings that it wasn't necessary to have proxy forces in the region and that they could accomplish their objectives in other ways. But, the major clash with Hezbollah several years ago demonstrated the risks of not having a proxy South Lebanese army there to protect their interests. The small U.S. and French delegations were based in Cyprus, a neutral location. We would travel to a UNIFIL Headquarters in south Lebanon in a UN facility to have the meetings. But I did travel on two occasions to Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to have discussions with the governments. Of course, predictable things were said, but the most memorable discussion to me was the statement by the Lebanese army Commander that the Lebanese Army was anxious to resume control of all parts of Lebanon and would deploy to the border if the Israelis were to withdraw their support for the south Lebanese army. Despite his words, this remained a question and when Israel withdrew its support for the South Lebanese army, Hezbollah filled behind those positions and the Lebanese National army did not challenge Hezbollah. So this created the conditions for periodic clashes and on one occasion quite a significant conflict in the following years.

So that's about it on that other than to say you know it was an amicable relationship on most of our parts, although the Lebanese and the Syrian representatives virtually never spoke to the Israeli representatives outside the formal meeting room. We all had pretty Spartan quarters with one outer room and one back bedroom for each delegation. So on those sessions that lasted multiple days, our delegation would have to trade off taking naps. The Syrian representative who was a military officer enjoyed his role of most times not into being actively in the acrimony between the Israeli and Lebanese sides, but eventually being the final arbiter on the Lebanese position. He would encourage us to come to him to help resolve any major issues and would take some pride behind the scenes in telling the Lebanese representative to accept the compromise positions that the French and American co-chairmen had put forward.

I'll note another interesting piece of history in view of current developments in Syria. This same Syrian General used to speak to us, the French and American delegations, of Syria's effective suppression of what he described as Muslim fundamentalists in Hama in 1982, a government action reported to have killed some 20,000 residents of Hama. The Syrian General stated that the Syrian Government's action had helped assure that Syria did not have "the fundamentalist problem" that other Arab governments had.

I should add one other incident during my time in this position. During one of my two trips to Beirut for meetings with the Lebanese government, we traveled to Mount Lebanon to meet with the Prime Minister, the late Rafiq Hariri. His was one of the few Muslim houses on Mount

Lebanon and looked down on most of the Christian houses on the mountain. Well in the course of our conversation, one of my team members asked a question that would have required a delicate response regarding Syria. Hariri looked at the phone by his side and said that he would answer the question, but not there. So he walked to the far side of the room with us following and answered the question. Several years later, Hariri was assassinated in a car bombing.

WALTER B. DEERING
Security Officer
Beirut (1999-2000)

Walter Deering was born and raised in New York and was educated at Hobart College and the University of Virginia. After service in the US Army in Counter Intelligence, he joined the State Department Bureau of Security in 1978 and worked in that Bureau in the US and abroad. His foreign assignments include Madrid, Damascus and Beirut, serving as Embassy Security Officer at those Embassies. In the United States Mr. Deering was posted to Field Offices in Los Angeles and Miami. In 2003 he was appointed Director of Field Operations of the State Department's Bureau of Security and served in that capacity until his retirement in 2004. Mr. Deering was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Well then, so we're off to Beirut

DEERING: In your last couple of months, you're kind of getting ready for your on-going assignment and then I left in, I went on leave in July, early August and I finally went over, I guess it was mid-August and then I arrived in Beirut I think the first or second week, right after Labor Day of 1999.

Q: You were there until when?

DEERING: I was there until September of 2000. I arrived, I flew into Athens, hopped over to Cyprus and awaited the helicopter into Beirut. At that point in time, all personnel, both going to and departing Beirut, from the embassy had to fly on the charter helicopter. It was no longer the military that was providing the helicopter service, it was a charter service that had been in existence for some time. But that was the only way that you were allowed to travel in and out of Beirut at that time, in 1999.

Q: What was the situation when you got there?

DEERING: The situation was that conditions had improved in Beirut in the late Nineties. The war was kind of behind everyone. There were still the various religious factions that played major roles in how business was done in Beirut. The Israeli, the South Lebanese Army, was still occupying Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah and it were involved in almost daily skirmishes to see who was running the show.

Beirut was still a dangerous place. All of our personnel on the compound were required to travel with bodyguards off the compound and in armored vehicles, embassy vehicles. There was no travel off the compound other than under those circumstances. Before I had gotten there there had been a downsizing of the motorcade support for our Americans and the ambassador especially when he traveled off the compound. The days were gone of the follow car with the fifty caliber machine gun mounted on a mount on top of one of the vehicles. While there was a downsizing there was still a heavy presence of bodyguards, very well trained bodyguard force, Lebanese nationals. And a move was afoot to lessen restrictions on travel in Lebanon, allow for more travel off the compound, allow for more travel for both business and social purposes off the compound. There was still a curfew. You could not spend a night off the compound unless there were exigent circumstances that the ambassador would have to make a decision on. While I was there, this policy, very restrictive policy, was under constant review and there were those elements who were very strongly opposed to continuing such a high level of security on our operations in Lebanon. There hadn't been any incidents against Americans since the mid-1980's, the kidnappings. There were a couple of incidents where explosive rockets were found, devices were found in proximity to the compound that had been aimed at the compound but didn't work, but there were no major incidents. There were no incidents involving Americans, so the move afoot was to open up Lebanon, open up the embassy in Beirut to allow for less restrictive travel, more travel off the compound and eventually look at downsizing the bodyguard size, the size of the bodyguard details, downsizing the size of the motorcades and also looking at the use of Beirut International Airport for our comings and goings.

Shortly after I got there a decision was made that there would be some attempts at utilizing Beirut, the airport, for travel in and out of Lebanon. One of my tasks was to establish a relationship with the Lebanese authorities to ensure that if we were to use the Beirut International Airport we would get the necessary level of support there to ensure our safety. Not an easy task but it was something that the embassy wanted and also that the Lebanese wanted, too, because if they could say that Americans were now traveling in and out of Beirut International Airport that things were better and what the Americans do. A lot of people laughed, still, in Lebanon about the high levels of security that the American Embassy still maintained and I had many Lebanese ask me, "Why do you still travel around with all these armed bodyguards? It's safe here. Nobody's going to bother you."

Well, it's safe to a certain extent and it's safe as long as the bad guys don't want to do anything, but Syria was calling the shots in Lebanon and the Lebanese were at the beck and call of Syria and so what happened in Damascus still had an effect on what happened in Beirut. Having served in Damascus, I thought I had a pretty good understanding of how the politics of the region worked and I wasn't about to go gung ho to reducing the security levels in Beirut because there was an element in the embassy that thought that this would be a good idea and let's do it and get it done. Because at the end of the day, as I told the ambassador in my first day there, when I had my first sit down with him – and I had known Ambassador Satterfield, Ambassador Dave Satterfield and I had worked with him in Damascus earlier, when he was political officer for Beirut but serving in Damascus because Beirut was closed – and I told him, my job here is to make sure everybody's safe. And your job here is to make sure everybody's safe. And at the end of the day there are two people responsible for the safety of our people and mission and that is me and you, and ultimately,

it's you. So whatever you do, the ramifications will certainly affect me but it will more affect you. So let's not drive this train down the tracks at breakneck speed. "Okay, okay, okay." And generally, there was a lot of pressure to reduce the people. The ambassador would get calls from Lebanese saying one of your details drove by and stuck a rifle out the window at me and so I'd have to deal with those kinds of complaints.

But in reality, it was a time of change. I had as my deputy RSO, who arrived a month after I did, one of my supervisors from Miami. We'd established a very close working relationship and we thought along the same lines. So we were alter egos for each other. If I wasn't there, he was there and vice versa. There were a lot of bad actors still in Lebanon. We were fairly effective in establishing relationships with the Lebanese authorities and especially those from the different directorates that were responsible for protecting the embassy, and we developed some very good sources of information while we were there, early on. A lot of these folks, Muslims as well as Christians, in the services, told us that things were not as peaceful as they might appear to be and that there was an element still in Lebanon, several elements that were troublemakers and who would like to see Lebanon return to the days of the civil war, where the factions were killing each other left and right, and that the Muslim Brotherhood was still an issue there. We even had people telling us that al Qaeda, this was remember, 1999, that al Qaeda was present in Lebanon. We had a couple people that kept banging this to us, if they had more tools and techniques, they could do a better job of tracking these people. So things were not peachy keen but things were not bad. We did get out a lot. We got out to dinner, restaurants were open again. We were able to socialize, which I think is important because at your social functions and in the homes of the Lebanese you can hear things that you wouldn't hear on the street. So there was a lot going on and it was a busy time.

Shortly after our arrival there, there were some major incidents, up in the northern part of Lebanon, where an army patrol was attacked. Ultimately the Russian Embassy was attacked, with casualties. So there was, what's going on, what's going on in Beirut. We did a lot of reporting back on what we were picking up through our DS channels and I was constantly reminding the ambassador and the DCM that, "Hey, this is still Beirut, Lebanon and yes, no one's bothering us now but if we weren't driving around town in our armored vehicles with our bodyguards, would that still be the case? And if Syria says Americans are free targets again, then what? Hezbollah doesn't like us. There are other elements in Lebanon that don't like us and there are elements in Syria that don't like us. So the whole political situation in Lebanon and in Syria as far as I was concerned had a major role in what was going on. Not only that but at the same time Hezbollah was getting more and more active in the south.

The Israelis, in my opinion, had realized by then that this, maintaining their presence in South Lebanon through the SLA, was a lost cause and it was only a matter of time before they withdrew. But in the interim, there were several incidents involving Israeli retribution against the Lebanese infrastructure because of the fact that they warned Lebanon, if you can't control Hezbollah, we're going to hold you responsible, we're going to hold Syria responsible. So there were a lot of incidents, one of which involved the Israelis attacking the electrical plant just outside Beirut, in the middle of the night, which then led to anti-American demonstrations because we were in bed with the Israelis, etc, etc.

So there were always dynamics going on but through it all we did in fact manage to open up the

Beirut International Airport, which was a major accomplishment, with the guarantees of special treatment for American diplomats to ensure our safety, with the guarantees from the Lebanese that we would not be bothered. So ultimately in July of 2000 the last flight of the helicopter took place from Cyprus to Beirut and Beirut to Cyprus and the air bridge no longer existed. I assume we are still using Beirut International Airport.

We had several demonstrations against the embassy while I was there. Some got fairly close but the Lebanese authorities always were able to maintain crowd control. They used tear gas, they used water hoses for the first time which, again, created some problems but the year there was an extremely active year.

Q: Did you have, or could you have, contact with Hezbollah?

DEERING: No, we were not allowed to have direct contact with Hezbollah. If we were talking to someone who was Hezbollah, we wouldn't necessarily know about it. There had been a couple of incidents prior to my arrival and the years before, where members of the local guard force had been kidnapped and threatened and released by Hezbollah, saying, you're straying into territory you better not stray into. We had constant reports that we had to follow up on of plots against the embassy. Where the embassy sat in East Beirut we were, if you look up on hillsides, there were places that looked right down onto the compound and there was always that there would be rocket propelled grenade attacks from the high ground or something along those lines. We were constantly working with the Lebanese forces, the Lebanese armed forces, who maintained the perimeter around the embassy. We had a very active surveillance protection program that we established while I was there from existing members of the guard force into a surveillance protection detachment that was also made up of Lebanese internal security forces. This was the first time that a joint working relationship between the internal security forces and the local guard force at the American Embassy had taken place since the civil war days. There was a distinct distrust of the ISF, that they, the Internal Security Forces, were not capable, competent folks. But we worked with them, we developed a very good relationship with them and in fact they did participate actively, hand chosen people to work in our surveillance protection program which had become one of the most effective surveillance protection programs among all our embassies.

Q: How about the members of staff of the embassy? Political officers have to get out and talk to people or economic ones do, consular officers have to have investigations. How did this work?

DEERING: It worked, when they went out, they went out with the bodyguards. As I said, there was a system in place. You had to request a motorcade to do something 24 hours in advance. Now obviously if something of an emergency came up, an emergency came up, that could be waived but the motorcade request had to be approved by the RSO and by the DCM or the ambassador. Now obviously the ambassador and the DCM, they could travel, they had their own details assigned to them on a full time basis so they could travel whenever they wanted wherever they wanted.

The people who had money flaunted it. The people who had wealth flaunted it. It was not uncommon on the weekends to see the Lebanese out dressed to the nine, at the restaurants, at the clubs but it was the same people you saw all the time. The Daily Star, the English language newspaper there, had a social page that was just dedicated to the beautiful people in Lebanon and

all of their charitable and social events. Of course then there was the other Lebanon, the Palestinian camps, where we had little contact, if any and the other various sectors of Lebanese society. It was a very class oriented society and further broken down by the various political and religious groups. The government is set up so that the Muslims and the Christians and the various factions of the Muslims share equally in the government. The prime minister is Muslim, the president is Christian, the head of the internal security forces was Christian, the head of the Lebanese Army was Christian, the head of the customs, immigration equivalent was Muslim and then within each of the organizations there was a breakdown, so that each group got its representation, whether they were qualified or not. It was a society where there was obviously a friendship towards the American people. More Lebanese live in the United States than live in Lebanon now and in other parts of the world also. So almost everybody you met, that I met, whether Muslim or Christian, had relatives in the United States. So there wasn't a feeling of anti-Americanism, because people had ties, whether they were Muslim or not, or Christian. So it was kind of a, it was very interesting society, very friendly. If you were invited into the home of Lebanese, you were treated like royalty. Just the Middle East way, of course but. The gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have nots, was significant.

Q: You get over to your old stamping grounds of Damascus?

DEERING: Yes I went over once, one trip, I guess it was April of 2000, I went over with the ambassador. He had some business over there so I went over with him, just to see what was going on. I did get to travel all over Lebanon. I was on R&R in May of 2000 when the Israelis packed up and literally left overnight. When I came back one of the things that we were involved with was taking trips down into South Lebanon, where we hadn't been able to go before and see what was going on down there. So I did get to take a trip through South Lebanon, which was kind of an exploration of the area, see some of the areas that the Israelis had occupied and I mean literally, they packed up and left and were gone. So that was an interesting journey but you always had to be careful because there were people watching you all the time, there's no doubt about that. When we were out and about, there were people keeping an eye on what we were doing.

Q: Was there a Marine detachment?

DEERING: No, no Marines. The security office was comprised of an RSO, deputy RSO and I think we had, I can't remember if it was six or seven assistant RSOs, the largest post, as far as Americans, at the time assigned to the Regional Security Office. We had a multitude of functions. We had protective security responsibility, where we had to run the local bodyguard force. We had the external security force, which was the perimeter force for the compound. The were, I guess, about 150 to 200 fulltime guards and then the bodyguard force was comprised of 55 extremely well trained, dedicated bodyguards.

Q: Where would one train bodyguards? These would be Lebanese.

DEERING: A lot of them had received training in the United States. We'd bring them back for training, driver training, defensive training and on the job training and constant training on the compound.

Q: On this subject, had sort of protective techniques changed much over the years you served or was there a fairly standard way of dealing with that? Talking about the protection.

DEERING: Well, there are a variety of different protective services techniques. There is the Secret Service way, which is you throw numbers and you have your circles of protection. SY and DS, we trained at a lower level, much more flexibility, because we don't have the numbers to use and we were working with other law enforcement agencies to support our operations. In Beirut it was pretty heavy handed, because of the nature of the beast. I had not experienced before constant traveling around with bodyguards all over the place but there were always bodyguards in proximity to us. The rules were very strict and they followed the rules. For example, an American never touched a door handle. When you got in a car, the door was opened by a bodyguard. That was part of his responsibility that that's his vehicle, you're a passenger, that's all you are. He's responsible for putting you in the car, getting you out of the car and making sure you get back in the car safely and with you, etc, etc, etc. So, very stringent operating procedures. Trained in using the cars, for blocking vehicles. Sometimes a little bit overzealous in that and trained in use of a variety of weapons. The difference being that this is what these guys did for a living. There were 55 of them, that was their job, protecting the Americans as bodyguards. They weren't doing anything else. That was their job. Whereas we as agents, we'd do a protection detail, then go off and do an investigation, something else, or we'd be assigned to the Secretary's Detail for two years, or whatever, moving on. These guys were trained, they believed in what they were doing, so it was protective services at a fairly high level. We'd do what we sometimes call escort details, where the threat level isn't there on a person but it's a political thing. So we're putting three or four agents, we'd stay with them during the day, put them to bed at night and come back in the morning. It's for political expedience, it's not protection but they're agents. In Beirut it was, here's the way it is, here's the package, here's how we operate. We had, an assistant RSO I had, traditionally in charge of the protective program, generally traveled with the detail on the ambassador, although towards the end we kind of pulled away from that, also but the bodyguards were responsible to an American at all times. Like I say, these guys were loyal employees that liked their job and, quite frankly, having a job at the American Embassy was a good thing. Jobs were scarce.

Q: Well then, after a year, 2000, where'd you go?

DEERING: I left Beirut in September of 2000 and I was assigned as our division chief at our protective intelligence investigation division, which is part of our Office of Criminal Investigations in Washington. So it was on the plane, back to Florida, sell my house, come up and establish myself in Washington. Now that's another key thing. I want to zero in on this here. Over the years, a lot changed in the State Department as far as administrative support of its employees, especially SY and DS. Domestically, if you weren't part of SY and then DS, you could be 90 per cent, 95 per cent sure that when you're assigned in the United States, you're going to be assigned in Washington, DC. You had your passport agencies but very few passport agencies had Foreign Service Officers. You had the center in Miami that had some Foreign Service Officers, now there's some more down there that and I don't know if there are any in Charleston now or not. So when I first came on in SY, travel benefits, transfer benefits were foreign to the State Department when it involved domestic moves, because they really didn't have to deal with it. Again, as ST grew and became DS and DS grew, you have more and more domestic transfers. So things really, really did change. When I left Miami, it had been approved some years before, I don't remember what the

exact date was, that if you were employed when you went overseas and you came back to a third location, then if you didn't sell your house before you left the Department would pay all the closing costs. So it almost became a game where if I had gone to Beirut, sold my house before I left and then went back to Washington I was on my own, as far as selling that house in Florida. But by waiting 'til I came back, selling the house, I'd returned from my tour, the State Department picked up all the closing costs. And it was a fight to get the Department – and really I think it really happened when more other Foreign Service Officers started being assigned in other places around the United States. But again, I think my point here is that the State Department has not always been forward looking in taking care of its employees and the benefits that are allegedly derived by being able to serve overseas and your cost of living allowances and your danger pay, your hazardous duty pay and all that, for some reason I always got that the mentality of the State Department bureaucracy was, that's reward enough. I remember when it was sometimes almost impossible to get the home leave that was coming to you. "No, you've got to be here, we can't give you any time off." What's that all about? I think we've come a long way in the Department in the past ten years as far as those kinds of issues are concerned. An unhappy employee is not a good employee. So, again, just kind of a little aside there, because we do move so much.

End of Reader